

FUSION

MONEY FOR NOTHING ON THE NET

DOES THE PLAYSTATION DELIVER?

GATEZILLA

CAN ANYONE STOP
BILL GATES FROM RESHAPING
THE INTERACTIVE LANDSCAPE?

SANDRA BULLOCK DOES THE NET

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I was
passing through a wasteland when suddenly my mind drifted



AOL® keyword: NOA www.nintendo.com

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my spirit lifted. my location shifted into
a
new
dimension
a
third
dimension
a
good
dimension.

Was this their intention?
To crash my dimension?

I stepped into the invention
and heard a voice say.

Turn it on Virtual Boy.[™]
A 3-D game for a 3-D world.

Nintendo[®]


Virtual Boy is a portable 32-bit 3-D game system, featuring phase linear array technology, digital stereo sound, two high-resolution visual displays, and 3-D graphics that immerse you in the game. Coming soon—stereo headphones and Game Link[®] cable for head-to-head action.

Turn it on and experience the
difference a dimension can make.



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CONCERT HALL.

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Original Source of our game reviews can't keep their hands off the bottle during business hours. Virtual Paul is actually published by Interplay and Blood Bowl is published by Microleague. Our most humble apologies to these fine companies.

If I were a superhero I would be Xanthanous, exposing myself to all. —Scott Cowley

CRITICAL MASS

► Each year, around this time, the airwaves become enlivened with sideshow chants of car dealers hawking the latest versions of autos bearing familiar names. This annual onslaught of droning salespeak is the product of an industry that has little left to discover and consequently, must reinvent itself each year to keep consumer passions in a perpetual state of excitement. Never mind the fact that big changes come around infrequently. Dealers and their benefactors are much more content to add some pinstriping here or an airbag there and herald the event somewhat akin to the invention of the wheel (or at least the intermittent wiper).

Computer software is experiencing something eerily similar in 1995.

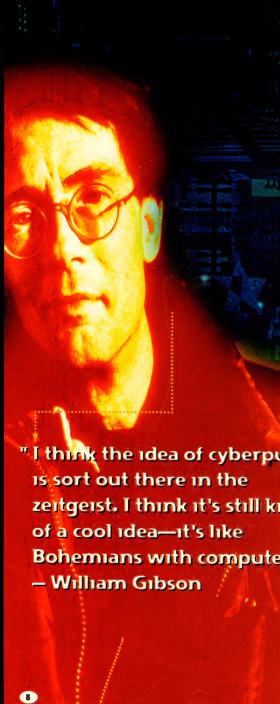
Splashed across billboards, newspapers, magazines and of course, television, various retailers are doing their best to shape the recent launch of *Windows '95* as the computer event of the decade. While their tactics may not be as amusing as their automotive brethren, you've got to wonder if they truly get the enormity of what Win '95 represents. This new super op is poised to rock the foundation on which nearly every facet of computer communication and interaction is built upon—including entertainment. After you pull away all of the fancy talk, you discover that Win '95 is more than just an airbag upgrade. Loading this code will not only improve your performance, it allows you to transform your computer into the ultimate games machine, on-line conduit and electronic shopping center...and that's just for starters.

True to form, Microsoft has painted a digital masterpiece and even though it requires a larger canvas of RAM, it is now and will continue to reshape how we entertain ourselves. Microsoft has addressed many of the pure entertainment problems that plagued earlier revs of *Windows*—most noticeably is its arduous gaming environment—and added several new features, including the much-feared Microsoft Network (MSN).

Many sources have succeeded in mislabeling Bill Gates and his Microsoft empire as a company out of control and incapable of feeling the pinch of real competition. Many have rallied around the packaging of MSN with Win '95 by saying that such a move would destroy competition. Yet prior to the launch of the operating system, its impending introduction has had the opposite effect. Nearly all commercial on-line services are now offering more options, greater access to the Internet and stronger opportunities for content providers—steps that have been taken largely based on the competitive threat they perceive from Microsoft's new on-line service. What Microsoft detractors have to realize is that because *Windows '95* is probably the best thing to ever happen to the personal computer—especially if you're interested in interactive entertainment—the opportunities it generates for game developers, on-line publishers and others dwarf any advantages that the company may possess as a result of its release.

Which brings us back to autos. Can you imagine the maker of the airbag being told that his invention would not be allowed inside of automobiles because it made them too safe? Rewarding ingenuity and excellence with boundaries and restrictions, prohibiting a progressive contribution from getting into the hands of people who can be made better by it, is not the way to create quality or competition, much less quality competition.

—The Management



"I think the idea of cyberspace is sort out there in the zeitgeist. I think it's still kind of a cool idea—it's like Bohemians with computers — William Gibson

September, 1995

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"The kids are going to look at Christopher Lambert (who's playing Raiden), and be like, 'That's not Raiden!' Christopher Lambert looks so stupid."

— Rich (Kano) Divizio

"For the people selling those other systems, Playstation creates a bad news situation—period."

— Steve Race

"3DO? Is that a deodorant? That seems an awful lot of money for a deodorant."

— William T. Evans



FUSION READER SURVEY



Send to: FUSION Reader Survey, 1920 Highland Avenue, Suite 285, Lombard, IL 60148

NAME _____
ADDRESS _____
CITY, STATE _____
ZIP CODE _____
TELEPHONE () _____

1. What is your age?
a. Under 11
b. 12-17
c. 18-24

d. 25-34
e. 35-44
f. Over 50

2. What is your sex?
a. Male
b. Female

3. Do you use a personal computer?
a. At home only
b. At work/school only
c. Both home and work/school
d. None of the above

4. What type of computer do you use?
(Circle all that apply)
a. IBM/Compatible
b. Macintosh
c. Amiga
d. Atari
e. Commodore
f. Apple (Non-Mac)
g. Tandy/Radio Shack (Non-RM)

5. Which of the following do you spend most of your free doing?
a. Working in an office
b. Watching TV
c. Lying at the beach
d. Forming/unfollowing in front of a computer
e. Repeating, "It's just a dream! Please, God, let it be just a dream!"

6. What kind of PC do you own?
a. 286
b. 386
c. 486
d. Pentium
e. Other

7. What is the speed?
a. 33 mHz
b. 50 mHz
c. 66 mHz
d. 75 mHz
e. 100 mHz

8. Do you plan on buying a new PC in the next 6 months?
a. Yes
b. No

9. Do you plan to upgrade to Win 95 within six months of its release?
a. Yes
b. No

10. How do you gain access to the Internet?
a. America Online
b. Compaq/Service
c. Prodigy
d. School
e. Private Internet provider

11. How often do you use the Internet?
a. Daily
b. Couple of times a week
c. Once a week
d. Less than once a week
e. Do not use

12. If you were to have the opportunity to run one organization in the world, which one of the following would you choose?
a. The government
b. The Mafia
c. Local mosque lodge
d. Microsoft

13. What types of software do you use regularly?
a. Games
b. Education
c. Children's
d. Entertainment
e. Reference
f. Business
g. Communication

14. Which of the following accessories do you currently own?
a. Graphics board
b. Internal/external modem
c. SVGA Monitor
d. Sound board
e. Joystick
f. CD-ROM drive
g. After market speakers

15. Which of the following accessories do you plan on buying in the next 12 months? (Circle all that apply)
a. Graphics board
b. Internal/external modem
c. SVGA monitor
d. Sound board
e. Joystick
f. CD-ROM drive
g. After market speakers

16. Which video gaming system(s) do you own?
(Circle all that apply)
a. Nintendo
b. Super NES
c. Ultra64
d. Game Boy
e. Sega Genesis
f. Sega CD system
g. Sega Saturn
h. PlayStation
i. PC
j. Game Gear
k. TurboGrafx
l. NeoGeo
m. 3DO
n. Atari Lynx
o. Jaguar
p. None

17. Where do you purchase your software?
a. Electronics store
b. Record store
c. Video store
d. Toy store
e. Mail order
f. Department store
g. Other

18. How much do you spend on software annually?
a. \$0-\$25
b. \$26-\$50
c. \$51-\$100
d. \$101-\$150
e. \$151-\$200
f. \$201-\$250
g. \$251-\$300
h. \$301-\$350
i. \$351-\$400
j. \$401-\$450
k. \$451-\$500
l. \$501-\$550
m. \$551-\$600
n. \$601-\$650
o. \$651-\$700
p. \$701-\$750
q. \$751-\$800
r. \$801-\$850
s. \$851-\$900
t. \$901-\$950
u. \$951-\$1,000
v. \$1,001-\$1,500
w. \$1,501-\$2,000
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IT BLEEDS ACID.

IT CAN READ YOUR MIND.

IT IS A BORN KILLER.

IT IS THE LEAST OF YOUR WORRIES.

ALIENS™

A COMIC BOOK ADVENTURE

IN SPACE, EVIL WEARS MANY FACES.



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BLADEFORCE. The year—2110 A.D. The city—Megagrid. A gritty metropolis reeking with the stench of organized crime. You enter this cesspool wearing only a helicopter flight suit and a big grin that says "Hello Mr. Criminal. My gun is bigger than yours." You fly in real time. You fire in real time. They die in real time. Have a real good time. **Features:** 360° 3D flying. 3D worlds. 3D everything. You spin. You soar. You shoot. You spew. Pack the Dromedrine. 16,000 true 3D objects. 28 missions and 7 crime-infested levels. Buy this game, get the motion sickness free.



All Those In Favor Of Gun C



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ON
3DO

**BLADE
FORCE**



What's responsible for these two AAA features? The award-winning Studio 3DO of course. These legendary videogames have turned the most advanced gaming technology on the planet into their own sensory amusement park—and every ride's an "E" ticket. See your favorite retailers or to order direct, call 1-800-336-3506 or visit us up on the Web: www.3do.com





KILLING TIME

Control, Please Skip This Ad.

ONLY
ON
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**WE
GOT
IT.
THEY
DON'T.**



KILLING TIME. What a politically correct title, eh? You're trapped in a horrifying 3D world of the undead. But lucky you. You've brought along some serious firepower. You've got to shoot first and catch your breath later. To solve the mystery, listen to the ghosts for clues. You'll have to call on your wits, call on your weapons or call for an organ donor if things go south. **Features:** 16 horrific enemies (only 3DO could get 7 genuine ghosts on videotape), 45 supernatural areas to discover and over 200 rooms to explore. Requires use of the head, if it hasn't been blown off already.

Expo Architect Gets Ousted!

It's insulting enough to be chosen last in a neighborhood game of kickball, but it's particularly nasty when you were the one who organized the event in the first place. A spurned Eliot Minsker, CEO of trade magazine publisher *Knowledge Industry Publications*, is feeling a similar indignity these days, having recently been shucked off by his neighborhood running mates Infotainment World and the Interactive Digital Software Association.

At the moment, the quibbling between KIP and IDSA involves control over trade show turf, specifically E³ (Electronic Entertainment Expo), the most comprehensive convention ever devoted to

interactive entertainment.

Back in the winter of '94, when Minsker first allied with fellow publisher IW and won an endorsement from the interactive industry's juggernaut executive body, IDSA, he envisioned KIP as a lasting partner in the lucrative venture. And why not? The trade show architect managed to successfully unshackle E³ from the all-consuming Consumer Electronics Show. And in one year alone, E³ proved to be the largest trade show in L.A. history.

Unfortunately for Minsker, he and KIP haven't been invited back to spring camp to produce the immensely

profitable May '96 expo. Instead, IDSA has brazenly chosen to endorse themselves for next year. E³ veteran, Infotainment World, and newcomer, Mitch Hall Associates, have been invited to help produce the '96 show as well.

According to reports, Minsker, who claims to have sired the E³ brainchild, avers that he was "treated badly," and argues that it was he who approached fellow publisher Infotainment World with the germinal idea.

While Minsker was not available to comment on the dispute, Sheila Alper, vice president of Trade Shows for KIP remarked, "...the board [IDSA] simply decided they wanted another management company." Alper added, that without the IDSA's endorsement of KIP for next year, her company's hold on E³ is, well, worthless. Without much

recourse, KIP is selling off all rights to the show. "We

E³-JECTED

A wave of the wand, a sleight of hand and a few hocus pocuses later, E³ disappeared right before Minsker's eyes.

have a partnership agreement on the show, and a potential agreement for IW to buyout the show from us."

According to Valerie Hennigan, marketing manager for Infotainment World, IDSA's co-opting of the show really shouldn't have come as any surprise. "They [IDSA] said they were going to bring the show back to bid, and so they did."

Alper, however, claims that "...the board made their decision before the show ever took place." From the sound of things, KIP never received news of, or was never invited to give, an RFP (request for proposal) from IDSA.

When asked to comment, Doug Lowenstein, IDSA president (in his circumlocutive PR drone), refused to discuss the reasons behind the disassociation

with KIP. Instead, he avouched that IDSA conducted a fair evaluation process in determining the players in next year's show.

Just as obscure are the details outlining the new proposal for the '96 expo. Few changes have been made thus far, Hennigan announced. The IDSA, whose mighty list of board members include: Atari, Disney, JVC, Nintendo, Sega, Sony, Time Warner, Universal, Viacom among others, has so far agreed to "not mess with success." A bigger show and a need for more space seem to be top considerations at present. And oh, "now it's the Interactive Digital Software Association Show," Hennigan added.

And what about poor Minsker? He's the B-Day boy without a goodie bag. Feeling rather cynical about the whole fracas, KIP's Alper quipped, "It was a great show, and maybe we did too good of a job."

Internet Plumber

It takes time to weedwhack through the Internet's overgrowing and ever-expanding briar. And as the age-old adage says, "time is money." Especially when using a metered on-line service.

That's why Performance Systems

International, Inc. (PSINet) is introducing a flat-rate on-line service, using Pipeline USA software, that will cost the addicted Internet habitué no more than \$19.95 per month for unlimited, 24 hour-a-day surfing. Other less intoxicated users can sign up for a second service plan at a more sober \$5 per month for five hours of usage and \$1.50 per hour for all additional hours.

Subscribers hooked up to the Pipeline will receive their own electronic mail address and gain access to the global Internet, including the World Wide Web, FTP and Telnet via an easy point-and-click interface.

"It's truly plug and play," boasts Jeff Luther, product manager for Pipeline USA who explains that the service is ideal for beginners, particularly those who can't seem to navigate around complicated on-line commands and Internet gibberish. Launched only a year ago, the Pipeline already services 10,000 subscribers in the metro New York marketplace and hopes to serve an estimated 200 metropolitan areas by year's end. ■

Things aren't looking up for our cover-star body double, Godzilla. After a long and illustrious career, the King of All Monsters is reportedly set up to take a fall in his 22nd and last film *Godzilla Vs. Destroyer*.

And none too soon, the upcoming movie implies. The United Nations Godzilla Countermeasures Center has discovered that because of radioactive buildup in Godzilla's body, he has become the world's most dangerous pinata and may soon explode, raining hazardous fallout all over the world.

With the much-talked-about American Godzilla movie currently dead in the water, fans will soon be swarming to black market film sources for copies of G's final flie. For more info on Godzilla, visit one of the better addresses. <http://www.ama.caltech.edu/~mrm/godzilla.html> ■

Destroy All Monsters!

**KILLER INSTINCT DELI
YOU GET IN THE ARCADE
NES. A STATE-OF-
BUTCHER SHOP, SERVED
GOO & UNCENSORED MAY
BYPASS THE QUARTER**



Plenty of killer moves
in every box of K.I.
Losers need not apply.



AOL @keyword: NOA
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ACM technology is
what makes the
fighters look so
life-like...



All the bodily fluids
are intact...so clean up
after yourself will ya?



More killer combos
than you can shake
a stump at.

VERS ALL THE EXCESS
ON YOUR OWN SUPER
THE-ART 16-BIT
WITH ALL THE SPLAT
HEM. SO GO AHEAD-
SLOT-- K.I. IS HERE!!

Fold

For Hidden Game Tip,
Fold So "X" Meets "Y"



Fold



...uh we mean
unlife-like...
er...reptile-like.



What else can we say
'cept it's all on 16-bit
so bag the new system, bud.

Only for
SUPER NINTENDO
ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM



For a limited
time you get a CD
of the game music
—free cuts to go with
your cheap shots.



For one or two players.
So find a friend and
proceed to humiliate.

A Beautiful Day In The Neverhood

Yesterday: Earthworm Jim. Tomorrow: The World!

Last May, the very same day Interplay proudly announced its purchase of Earthworm Jim producer, Shiny Software, Doug TenNapel (animator and inspirer behind the extremely successful *Earthworm Jim*) made an announcement of his own. He was leaving the company.

This sparked yet another migration from Interplay as other company staff members decided to join TenNapel in forming Neverhood, a new video game development company.

He still reports a good relationship with Shiny, however, and explains that he continues to collaborate with them on *Earthworm Jim*-related material. "I've retained certain rights and still have creative control. It is difficult not having 100 percent of the rights, but everyone is being really cool about it. It's not like they took

it away from me or anything like that—it's just pretty much that Jim goes through Shiny."

Neverhood currently concluded negotiations with Dreamworks Interactive, an arm of Dreamworks SKG—the Steven Spielberg, Jeffrey Katzenberg and David Geffen newborn multimedia venture. The multimillion dollar deal is told to be a three-year, three-property arrangement with the first title planned for a Christmas '96 release. The aptly titled *Neverhood* is a quirky, gothic PC CD-ROM adventure, based on a collection of paintings TenNapel created back in '88 called, "The Beautiful Day In The Neverhood." TenNapel sums up the game as, "a world on trial where, depending how you play it, it [the world] may never exist if found guilty. It's a concept we're trying to get across about personal choices, so the player feels a little more

engulfed and maybe a little more responsible for the world. It's like playing the paintings I did."

The self-proclaimed "mayor" of Neverhood describes the initial Dreamworks meeting as a little looser than the suit-and-tie boardroom conference one have might imagined. "Actually Spielberg invited us to his house and served us cookies and lemonade—we showed our game and he liked it."

The *Neverhood*/Dreamworks deal also opens the properties up for other media outlets as well, such possible comic books, Saturday morning cartoons and films. ●



TenNapel can be reached at his e-mail address: tennapel@net.com



Project 3DO Drop!

The Masushita Consumer Electronics Company has reduced the price of their 3DO Interactive Multiplayer Game System, bringing the cost down to \$299.95.

Market analyst Gary Gablehouse of Fairfield Research, NA, explains this should mean a lot for the system's future. "It's a great thing for 3DO. We've seen a steady increase in purchase intent for 3DO, and this price drop will boost that and actually let it compete with the new generation systems like the PlayStation, Sega Saturn and Ultra 64."

But what does the man on the street have to say about this?

"3DO? Is that a deodorant?" asks William T. Evans of Lombard, IL. "That seems an awful lot of money for a deodorant."



Kiplay's Believe It Or Nightmares.

Welcome to the gestating nightmare as imagined by Swiss surrealist, H.R. Giger.

Cyberdreams Interactive Entertainment is introducing a screensaver for PC and Mac that features the award winning artist's brooding work, including designs from *Alien* and *RoboCop* '89 release *Species*.

Also included is an original Harlan Ellison short story, *The Dream of a Nightmare*. *Dreams* is an introduction by Ciger's Super VGA graphic rendered designs that, promisingly, will raise more neck hairs than a Wes Craven flick. ●



After hearing his
favorite games on
a Sound Blaster,
Vincent regretted
the ear thing.

Sound Blaster 32
Now Available



Inferior sound cards can drive you to some crazy ends. All of the awesome sound effects that are built into this year's hottest new games sound muffled and flat. So it feels like you're only getting half the experience.

But a Sound Blaster AWE32 sound card can spare you that insanity. You get only the best 16-bit, CD-quality audio. And suddenly, games come to life. That's because it uses Advanced WaveEffects™, SoundFont™ technology,



and a digital signal processor to do some really cool stuff. Like deliver 3-D wrap-around sound, plug into musical instruments, and create samples of your own recorded sounds.

And of course, the AWE32 belongs to the Sound Blaster™ family—the PC sound standard. It's the audio card that satisfies the most discerning ear. Ask for the AWE32 at your nearest Creative Labs dealer, or call 1-800-998-5227 Ext. 114.

CREATIVE

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PORN ON THE NET

Where's the health administration when you need it? The spread of sexually explicit material has hit epidemic proportions on Internet newsgroups and on World Wide Web sites. Unchecked youngsters have been attending Internet bordellos and brothels in droves.

Senator James Exon, D-Nebr., has been snooping around the Internet and he doesn't like what he's found—pictures and chatgroups on bestiality, bondage, erotica, fetishes, prostitution, pornography and pedophilia. Like a frothy-mouthed action hero, he's chosen to take matters into his own hands. Exon's legislative solution to cyberspace smut is called the Communications Decency Amendment, promising to discipline those persons involved in the transfer of sexually explicit material with a whopping maximum fine of \$100,000 and a maximum jail sentence of up to two years. His telecommunications bill has recently passed through the Senate by a vote of 86 to 14 and awaits a vote in the House.

No doubt, free speech advocates are concerned about Exon's immoderate stance on the bill and would prefer that families, not Big Brother,

watch over their children.

Enter SurfWatch, one of several new porn-blocking software packages that screens Internet groups, World Wide Web sites, FTP, Gopher, Chat and other services. For \$49.95, or as part of America Online, parents, teachers and employers alike can purchase the no-no, reprimanding device that flashes, "Blocked By SurfWatch," when forbidden

sites are accessed. An optional, additional fee of \$5.95 per month provides updates on new, but equally censurable sites.

Surprisingly, executives at *Playboy* and *Penthouse* are in support of the bowdlerizing software. It's better to put the discretion in the hands of parents, they feel, than in the crushing morality gauntlets wielded by Sen. Exon.

Will Exon go for the SurfWatch approach to censorship? Probably not—the program can't possibly catch every scrap and shred of sexually explicit material on the Internet. Let's face it, dirty

words come in variegated forms that can evade even the best of systems. To be sure, voyeuristic Internet porn aficionados will find many other ways to beat the system.

SurfWatch spokesperson Jay Friedland admits that some peppery words and topics are bound to make it through the software's filter. He explains, however, that computer savvy college graduates in the local Bay area are hard at work, combing the surf-ground for debris. "We're pretty aggressive about how we search for things. If they're going to be found by someone, they're going to be found by us." ●

DO YOU KNOW WHERE YOUR CHILDREN SURF?



Electric Dreams



Attention—women seeking the perfect e-male. For love at

first site, hypertext to <http://www.match.com>, the first on-line relationship service.

Founded in 1994 by cupid Gary Kremen, Match.com hopes to log love onto the Net and tap into the \$12.5

billion classified advertising industry. The service is targeted toward women, offering a cheaper and safer alternative to those exhilarating 900 numbers, video dating services and personal ads. There is no cost to post ads on the service or even to scam a look. The only time a charge is ever incurred, ranging from \$5-8, is when



e-mail is sent to ask someone out on a date.

Like a pushy grandmother, Match.com fusses that the

Internet is where a bachelorette can find her most eligible man. Of all Internet users, 90 percent are male and over half of them are educated 21- to 30-year-olds. A real dating smorgasbord! ●



It's a
digital jungle
out
there.

Primal Rage™

A ravaged Earth. Seven gods on the loose. A battle for supremacy. The Arcade Game of the Year comes to Jaguar CD. (Coming in November)

Max Force™

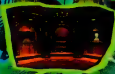
First-person action. Nerf-spewing weapons. At the Max Force Virtual Training Facility, you may not get killed ...just humiliated. (Coming in October)

Brett Hull Hockey™

High-sticking, hip-checking, hockey mayhem. With all the power, color, and speed of Jaguar. Zoom in on the action from multiple camera views. (Coming in October)

Myst™

The surrealistic PC adventure of the decade comes to life on Jaguar ...faster and more colorful than on any other planet. (Coming in September)



GET a JAGUAR CD NOW!

ATARI

Creature Shock™

Planet earth is dying and its inhabitants need a new home. Exterminate the deadly alien creatures which have taken over the SS Amazon, your space ship to the future. (Coming in October)

Battlemorph™

This cybermorph sequel takes you through new missions, worlds, and new underwater action, as you morph from tank to amphibian to fighter. (Coming in October)



Create the most powerful game system ever! Jaguar CD is now available in stores for only \$149. Experience the digital jungle unleashed with your Jaguar CD.

Killer titles coming soon for Jaguar CD:

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------|
| • Thea Realm Fighters | • Demolition Man |
| • Robinson's Requiem | • Highlander |
| • Mover Strike | • Baldies |
| • Rise Of The Robots | • Varuna's Forces |
| • Black ICE/White Noise | • Soul Star |
| • Wayne Gretzky Hockey | • Magic Carpet |



OVER
\$100
IN SOFTWARE INCLUDED
FREE!



only
\$149



JAGUAR
CD

Rule the jungle

FUSION

...FUSION STOCK MONITOR

The Fusion stock index rallied in June, both recovering from May's softness and setting a record high. In 1995, the index is up 34 percent. For the month, the overall index rose 22 percent driven by a 29 percent hike in share prices of PC-oriented companies and a 26 percent gain in retailer stock prices, both looking forward to the launch of Windows '95 in August.

The gainers were led by PC publishers Broderbund (up 42 percent after better than expected May quarter results were announced), Sierra On-line (up 38 percent in anticipation of the July release of *Phantasmagoria*) and Davidson (up 37 percent). Other PC stocks gains were AOL (up 24 percent), Activision (up 14 percent) and Creative Technologies (up 17 percent).

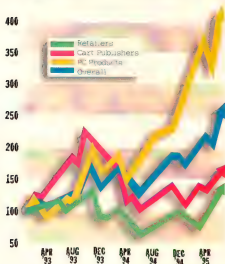
Retail stocks surged, too. Egghead shares jumped 31% as investors anticipated strong consumer sales of Windows '95 and the grand opening of an all-new store format in July. NeoStar

shares rose 29 percent as news circulated that sales of the Sega Saturn platform had pushed comparable store sales above breakeven in May, reversing months of negative comparisons.

Among the laggards, 3DO was up 5 percent, reflecting the impact of new game machines on 3DO's business (despite a Panasonic price cut to \$299 in June), Alias Research (acquired during the month by Silicon Graphics) and Spectrum HoloByte, up 2 percent, despite shipment of the long-awaited *Star Trek* CD-ROM game.

Looking forward, investors'll likely continue to acquire computer retail stocks, which will be early beneficiaries of Windows '95, and will anticipate strong consumer demand for the Sega Saturn and the Sony PlayStation, due in September. ■

FUSION Stock Monitor is compiled by John G. Taylor, an interactive entertainment industry analyst with Portland, OR-based Acadia Investment Corporation.



By the Numbers

1: The most popular PC game of the month was *Demolition Man* by Activision, with 14,000 copies sold.

2: The most popular PC game of the month was *Demolition Man* by Activision, with 14,000 copies sold.

3: The most popular PC game of the month was *Demolition Man* by Activision, with 14,000 copies sold.

4: The most popular PC game of the month was *Demolition Man* by Activision, with 14,000 copies sold.

CONFUSION

Berlin Faire Aug. 26-Sept. 4: USA Pavilion, Berlin, Germany; contact Margaret Cassilly at (703) 907-7620. Public.

EGM Supertour Aug. 26-27: Aurora Mall in Denver, CO; Sept. 1-3: Mall of America in Minneapolis, MN; Sept. 16-17: Sawgrass Mills in Miami, FL.

Windows World/Dallas Sept. 12-14: Dallas Convention Center, Dallas, TX; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-8600. Trade Only.

Software Publishers Association Sept. 26-30: Boston MA; contact Nadia Kader at (202) 452-1600 ext. 339; Fax (202) 783-3649; e-mail Internet: nkader@sapa.org. Trade Only.

PC Home Expo Sept. 28-Oct. 1: Jacob K. Javits Convention Center, New York, NY; contact the Blenheim Group, Annie Souly at (201) 346-1400 ext. 145. Public.

Winter Consumer Electronics Show Jan. 5-8, 1996: Las Vegas Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV; contact Electronic Industries Assn. at (703) 907-7600. Trade Only.

International Digital Software Association Show (The Artist Formerly Known As E3) May 16-18, 1996: Los Angeles; contact Valerie Hennigan at (415) 329-4300. Trade Only.

Summer Consumer Electronic Show May 23-25, 1996: Orlando Convention Center, Orlando, FL; contact Electronic Industries Assn. at (703) 907-7600. Trade Only.

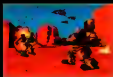
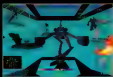
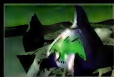


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BITS, BYTES AND BUZZ...

AT&T Paradyne reports it is working on *GlobeSpan* technology that will allow phone companies to provide *Multimedia Telephone Communications* over normal copper phone lines. The mix of this new technology along with new video compression and server technology should provide the necessary transmission speed to support live broadcast video and high-speed LAN access, says AT&T. **...MCA** plans to begin programming for its Universal Cartoon Online in 1996. Both original content as well as on-line versions of programming will be developed. **...CBS**

Television debuts with a full-service presence on *America Online* this fall. Features will include *The Late Show* with *David Letterman*, bulletin boards, a photo gallery, chat sessions and more. **...Nasbro Inc.** recently stopped research into their head-mounted, home virtual-reality game station, citing that they were not able to get chip costs down to a level to manufacture for the mass market. They had put \$59 million into the project since 1992. **...Ken Griffey, Jr.** recently signed an exclusive multiyear agreement with Nintendo of America, Inc. to act as game

development advisor and corporate spokesman. Two games are in development with the baseball star, one for the Super NES and one for the Ultra 64. **...America Online** reports it has exceed the 3 million subscriber mark. **...Rolling Stone Online** looms in the future. CompuServe has signed a deal with Wenner Media, Inc. to launch the on-line version of the once-subversive rock 'n' roll magazine, featuring 95 percent new material and frequent updates. **...The 3DO Company** executed a \$16.6 million common stock offering, the funds to be used for basic working purposes.

...Discovery Communications, Inc., the owners of *The Learning Channel* and *The Discovery Channel*, has gone by way of the Web with its latest production. *Discovery Channel On-line* debuted July 1, with a fall launch Sept. 1. Plans call for over 1,000 Web pages each month, amounting to more than 30 hours of viewing time. *Discovery Communications, Inc.* has reportedly put aside \$10 million for the project. **...Simon & Schuster** has allied itself with the Ziff-Davis Publishing Company to publish a planned 75 multimedia products and books this year. ●

NO MORE RUDE TELLERS!

Payday means a Friday lunch trip to the bank: tellers soused in *Drakkar Noir*, synthesized Broadway tunes and longer lines than a *Free Willy* sequel. It's Dante's vision of hell revisited. Thankfully, it's all about to change.

"You won't need to go to the bank anymore," promises Carol Corcoran,

public relations associate for Intuit, Inc. This fall, Intuit's *Quicken* personal finance software will allow consumers to deposit money, pay bills and maintain financial records from their home. Microsoft's *Money For Windows '95* will offer similar home-banking on-line service in association with 17 banks nationwide.

"We do not want to replace the bank," says Corcoran. "In regard to banking, banks know how to do that best. And we know how to do the software and technical aspects best. Our objective is to pull it all together and make it accessible to the user." ●

The Old IN's & OUT's

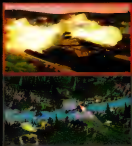
Aliens as supporting Cast
Major League Baseball
Ties as fashion accessories
Power lunches
Shoes that flash lights
Lives of quiet desperation
Saturday Night Live
Baggy jeans
Breast implants
Hurricane Dean
Dense Dances
Desert-choked Earth action flicks
Mike Tyson
Letterman & Leno
Generation X
Robert Longo
Tightly whittys
Godzilla
Mad waves
Barney
Beverly Hills 90120

Aliens as sex symbols
Arena football
Ties as nooses
Power PCs
Shoes that pay off college loans
McJobs
Mad TV
Jeans that store and kept food fresh
Truth in advertising
Hurricane Erin
Cyndi Lauper
Waterlogged Earth action flicks
Butter Bean
Jenny Jones
Kids
Robert Rodriguez
Boxer briefs
Minya
Air conditioning
The Muppets
Cleefuss

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combat experience of Command & Conquer™, you're thrust into the heat of an all-out race for global control.

DOMINATE YOUR

opponent through modem or network play. Will you side with the humanistic GDI or bring the world to its knees with the Brotherhood of Nod? Decide fast. Your adversaries are without mercy. And so are you.



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Fan Farm The Internet Pays Homage to Hollywood's Leading Ladies

While You Were Surfing

You could grow toenails longer than a hindu pundit before downloading the **Sandra Bullock Homepage** (<http://yallara.cs.mit.edu.au/~s9506564/sandra.html>). Just one of many "I Love Sandra Bullock" sites, this one leaves you wondering, "How much time do these guys have on their hands?" The quickly rising actress should either be flattered or very, very frightened as her fans have compiled every conceivable photograph of her, even pictures from Sandra's high school years.

Special links have also been set up to the Mississippi State University Movie Database where net-begoners can hypertext to particular Sandra Bullock movie pages — with yet more pictures, gag. Be sure to take a look at *The Bionic Showdown: The Six Million Dollar Man and the Bionic Woman* (TV, 1989), forever to be the gadfly of Bullock's career.

If all that can't appease your hunger, read through the site's listing upon listing of Sandra Bullock television appearances, speak your mind on alt.fan.sandra-bullock; or see your local therapist.



Reality Bites

Having achieved the dubious "Top 5% Pointcom's Point Survey Recognition," **Eric Harshbarger's Winona Page** (<http://www.duc.auburn.edu/~harshbw/www/winona.html>) has established itself as the Liberate of web fan sites. It's a goddamn spectacle!



Picture galleries, sound bites, articles, stories — adoration this great comes only once a decade. Even more amusing are all of the web site tributaries than run into this river of fanaticism — the strangest list of names on the net, including Magnus Lundquist, Brett Kokeggi, Tatar Jozsef and Winona Laura Horowitz, our actress' real name.

When Harry Net Salley

The **Meg Ryan Page** <http://web.cs.ualberta.ca/~davidw/MegRyan/meg.html> involves more active participation on your part (just slightly) than most other fan sites.



Included on the homepage are surveys and polls asking insipid questions like "What's your favorite Meg Ryan film?" If you'd rather not participate, which is perfectly understandable, you can instead read pages of venerating chitter chatter from some goo-goo-eyed devotee.

Http://Other.Notables

The **Uma Thurman Homepage** (<http://www.cvv.warwick.ac.uk/~earlj/Uma/>) is still under construction, but offers fans some interesting tid bits, and a link to a full Uma filmography. An impressive



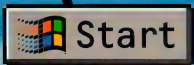
Heather
Locklear
Home
Page

(<http://metro.turnpike.net/garys/index.html>) gives the behind-the-scene goods on *Melrose Place*. Like totally cool *Clueless* star Alicia Silverstone and bad girl exhibitor Drew Barrymore are featured on their own hompages: <http://www.ets.com/browse/acemicro/AS.html> and <http://www.au.qnet.com/~zodi-ac/drew.html> respectively. Bat-babe Nicole Kidman can be adored at the over-testosteroned



Nicole
Kidman
Worship
Page

(<http://www.umich.edu/~rkmead/kidman.html>). You can find the latest on the fantastic adventures and films of bodacious Bridget Fonda: <http://www.cs.utexas.edu/users/ddk/bridgetfonda/bridgetfonda.html>; or join, would you believe, over five thousand monthly at the **Karen Allen Homepage** (http://www.in.net/~speng/karen_a/index.html). And of course, the immortal Marilyn Monroe still has her admirers, who can be found drooling at <http://uxl.cso.uiuc.edu/~jarrett/marilyn.html>.

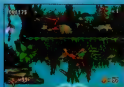


Playing!



Start having fun on Windows® 95 with Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure — 13 thrilling levels, fantastic side-scrolling gameplay, stunning animation and a truly incredible soundtrack.

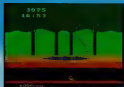
Because the best reason to upgrade to Windows® 95 is...playing!



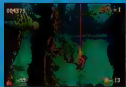
It's sheer panic above the crocodile pits!



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Microsoft Devours the World

By John Wesley Hardin

"Just because someone with a calculator recently deemed me the richest man in the world doesn't mean I'm a genius."

-Bill Gates



In William Gibson's
1984 novel
Neuromancer,

"microsofts" were small slivers of software that cyberpunks plugged into sockets under their ears, directly into their brains, to give them abilities they otherwise didn't have. In 1995, it's a viable analogy of Microsoft Corporation to the computing world.

Microsoft's disk operating system, MS-DOS, and its graphical extension, Windows, are the best-selling software in the history of commercial computer programs. Microsoft has sold over 60 million copies of Windows and estimates approximately 80 million people worldwide use the program. Almost 90 percent of all personal computers sold in the world use system software made by Microsoft.

So many consumers use DOS and Windows that the name Microsoft has become culturally impressed in the public's collective mind: Bill Gates is now a household name. New references to the company roll out daily, most recently a song dedicated to the joys of using Microsoft's word processor: *I Hate You, Microsoft Word*, and a WWWeb site devoted to Bill Gates called *Fuck The Skull of Microsoft*. Generation X author Douglas Copeland even has a recent novel about the corporate giant entitled, *Microverfi*, a fictionalized account of the life and times of a group of Microsoft employees (Imagine MTV's *Real World* in Redmond, WA, with a bunch of neurotic computer geeks). Like it or not, Microsoft is a big part of what being a computer user is all about these days.

In 1975, as an undergraduate at Harvard, Bill Gates formed Microsoft with Paul Allen, driven by his vision that the personal computer would eventually be a valuable tool in every home and office. It's safe to say that focusing on this vision has served him well. At present, Microsoft has positioned itself as the kind of company Gibson imagined ruling the future corporate food-chain. Rapidly becoming a hyper-media hydra,

Gate's corporation has employed over 17,000 people worldwide among their 49 international subsidiaries from Tasmania to Beijing as well as developing computer products available in 30 different languages. The 1994 net result: a fiscal return of over \$4.5 billion.

Despite all this, Microsoft doesn't actually rule the world, or even most of it. Their real-world revenues are behind those of IBM, AT&T and other corporate behemoths. Yet still, Microsoft is the one seated before the government's interrogation lamp right now. Some say that the only thing Microsoft has done wrong is to have become incredibly successful. Many others protest against what they see as very real violations of antitrust law.

Antitrust, Anti-Intuit-ive

Microsoft's long-looming legal troubles were brought to a head last February, when U.S. District Judge Stanley Sporkin threw out a 1994 antitrust settlement between Microsoft and the Justice Department. In June, Microsoft scored a tactical victory when Judge Sporkin's

decision was overturned by the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington. The court harshly criticized Sporkin's decision and granted Microsoft's request to have him removed from the case.

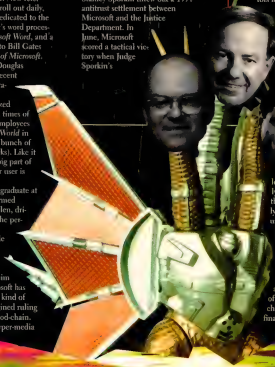
The settlement, regarded as little more than a slap on Microsoft's wrists by Silicon Valley analysts, is by no means a total victory for Gates and company. It eliminates the per-process license that had computer manufacturers paying Microsoft a fee even when they didn't use its software. The settlement also prohibits Microsoft from making licensing deals that last more than a year. In the past, Microsoft held licensees to three-or-more-year contracts, prohibiting them from signing with Microsoft competitors for that period of time.

Lastly, Microsoft will discontinue offering incentives to PC makers who commit to buying fixed numbers of systems in advance.

Previously, when the PC market didn't sell the agreed to number of systems, the obligation to Microsoft rolled over into the next year, in effect extending the length of contracts indefinitely. Microsoft executives insisted that these tactics were perfectly legal, but consented to stop using them.

Microsoft and the Justice Department, however, were far from reconciled. In May, the Justice Department blocked Microsoft's \$2.1 billion acquisition of Intuit, maker of Quicken, an electronic check writing and personal-finance program. With it,

Microsoft would have



PATIENCE IS A

VIRTUA



leveraged a major role in the burgeoning electronic banking industry.

It's precisely this kind of market leveraging that has brought Microsoft tete-a-tete yet again with the Justice Department.

MSN=Menacing, Scary Network?

On July 19 the CEOs of the Big Three On-line services—Steve Case of America On-line, Robert Massey of CompuServe and Edward Bennett of Prodigy—held a press conference to appeal to Congress, the Justice Department and Bill Gates to stop, or at least delay, the bundling of the Microsoft Network (MSN) with Windows. In an open letter to Bill Gates, the trio said, in part, "Dear Bill, by bundling Microsoft's service into the operating system that controls more than 80 percent of the market, you will set a dangerous precedent for the future of the computer industry. It will lead to loss of consumer choice and diminish competition...The on-line services industry would benefit greatly from another competitor, including Microsoft. But competition should take place on a level playing field... Do the right thing for the industry and the interests of millions of consumers. Unbundle Microsoft Network from Windows '95."

To back their claims, AOL, CompuServe and Prodigy pointed to a survey they sponsored by Luntz research of Arlington, VA, which reported that 53 percent of American PC owners would "favor action to ensure that there is competition" if "one company posed a direct threat to competition."

Microsoft's potential competitors in the on-line world feel that, with an anticipated 40 million people poised to buy Windows '95, Gate's dominance in the operating system market would be instantly leveraged

into an overwhelming lead. Under antitrust law, this may violate statutes against monopoly leveraging: the use of market power in one industry to gain overwhelming advantage in unrelated markets.

According to a CompuServe press release dated July 19, "The on-line industry is taking the lead on this issue not because we fear competing against Microsoft Network on a level playing field, but

because Microsoft is clearly working to tilt the playing field in its

favor.

[CompuServe] has had a long and mutually beneficial relationship with Microsoft, but...we are not going to stand by while Microsoft engages in practices that jeopardize what

is now an open, competitive and growing industry."

Critics point out that the MSN is listed as a component of Windows '95, and charge that the Windows '95 Setup leads users to the conclusion that the MSN is the only on-line service. Says Bob Massey, CompuServe's CEO: "The bundling of MSN into Windows '95 is the nose of the camel coming under the tent. If we as an industry don't step

Microsoft's bundling here and now, everyone will have to live with the whole camel."

Take Us to Your Leaders

On the day of the press conference, the three company heads also forwarded a letter to the House and Senate Majority and Minority leadership, including Bob Dole, Tom Daschle, Newt Gingrich and Richard Gephardt. The letter was written to "alert [Congress] to a critical precedent that is about to be set in the computer industry." Opposing company officers explained that "...the tens of millions of computer owners who are expected to parade to Windows '95...will be led to a single choice of on-line services — MSN."

Did their call for help land on deaf ears? Dole and Gingrich have spoken out against the Microsoft investigation, indicating the company was being harassed by "overzealous" government investigators.

Not good

news for AOL, CompuServe and Prodigy.

To assure political skeptics that they don't feel this is just a business issue, the three companies stated in their letter to legislators that this "...is not just about the future of the on-line services, it is about the future of the Information Age. Microsoft's Chairman and senior officers have been quite frank about their intentions—by exploiting their monopoly in desktop operating systems, they intend for Microsoft to control all

Dear Bill,
by bundling
Microsoft's service
into the operating system...you will set a
dangerous precedent.

BUT WHY WAIT... GET YOUR SPECIAL 32X™ VIRTUA FIGHTER™ TRAINING PACK RIGHT NOW!



GAME CARTRIDGE
NOT INCLUDED

Virtua Fighter is coming to Genesis 32X this Fall. But how can you start your training today? Get the Virtual Fighter Special 32X Virtua Fighter Training Pack and you get all this: **1** A coupon good for a \$20 off on a Virtua Fighter 32X game cartridge or a 32X software or a 32X hardware item. **2** An exclusive Virtua Fighter video with key game tips and upcoming highlights. **3** An entry form into the VT 32X Sweepstakes where you can win a Virtua Fighter arcade unit. **4** A one-of-a-kind Virtua Fighter T-shirt.

Your choice. You can train until Virtua Fighter for 32X is out in the stores like the rest of your friends, or you can join the Special 32X Virtua Fighter Training Pack, get a leg up on the competition and get the game for less! After that, it's every fighter for him or herself!

GENESIS
32X

SO WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR?

SEGA

© 1995 Sega of America, Inc. All rights reserved. Virtua Fighter is a registered trademark of Sega of America, Inc. All other trademarks are the property of their respective owners. The Virtual Fighter Special 32X Virtua Fighter Training Pack is available while supplies last. Offer good in the U.S. only. Some restrictions may apply. See store for details.

Microsoft Timeline

January 1975 — Paul Allen and Bill Gates decide to develop a BASIC Interpreter for the Altair.

February 1975 — Bill Gates and Paul Allen license BASIC to the manufacturer of the Altair 8800. This is the first computer language program written for a personal computer.

November 1975 — In a letter to Paul Allen, Bill Gates uses the name "Microsoft" for the first time.

February 1976 — Bill Gates, in "An Open Letter to Hobbyists," accuses amateur computing hobbyists of pirating software and preventing "...good software from being written." He concludes with, "...Nothing would please me more than being able to hire 10 programmers and deluge the hobby market with good software."

November 1976 — The trade-name "Microsoft" is registered.

December 1976 — Microsoft's year-end sales exceed \$1 million.

January 1977 — Microsoft moves its offices to Bellevue, WA, from Albuquerque, NM.

June 1981 — Microsoft reorganizes into a privately held corporation.

August 1981 — IBM introduces its Personal Computer, which uses Microsoft's 16-bit operating system, MS-DOS 1.0.

February 1983 — Paul Allen resigns as Microsoft's executive vice president.

August 1985 — Microsoft celebrates its 10th anniversary with sales figures for the fiscal year of 1985 at \$140 million. The company has 900 employees.

November 1985 — Microsoft announces the retail shipment of Microsoft Windows.

March 1986 — Microsoft stock goes public at \$21 per share, rising to \$28 per share by the end of the first trading day. Initial public offering raises \$61 million.

July 1990 — Microsoft, with revenues of \$1.18 billion, becomes the first personal computer software company to exceed \$1 billion in sales in a single year.

March 1992 — Microsoft ships Windows 3.1. It has over 1,000 enhancements from the previous version.

March 1993 — Microsoft introduces MS-DOS 6.0.

April 1993 — Microsoft reports more than 25 million licensed Microsoft Windows users.

June 1993 — The U.S. District Court of Northern California dismisses Apple's last remaining copyright infringement claim against Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard. Apple charged that Microsoft Windows 2.03 and 3.0, and HP's NewWave, were derivative of the Apple Macintosh operating system.

April 1994 — Windows for Workgroups 3.11 becomes world's best-selling retail operating system. Windows 3.1 is #2.

September 1994 — Microsoft announces Microsoft Windows '95, formerly code named Chicago. It is designed to replace Windows 3.11,

Windows For Workgroups 3.11 and MS-DOS as the mainstream desktop operating system.

November 1994 — Microsoft debuts global ad campaign. "Where Do You Want To Go Today?" is a \$100 million assault that Microsoft execs hope will build brand awareness with a non-technical audience.

December 1994 — Wal-Mart stores place Microsoft Products in high-traffic areas near checkout stands and busy aisles instead of the electronics section. Microsoft software has become an impulse buy item.

January 1995 — Microsoft Bob for Windows is announced at the Consumer Electronic Show in Las Vegas.

February 1995 — U.S. District Judge Stanley Sporkin rejects the government's antitrust settlement with Microsoft.

March 1995 — Microsoft and DreamWorks SKG announce a joint venture agreement to produce interactive and multimedia entertainment properties.

May 1995 — Microsoft and Intel terminate their planned merger to avoid months of protracted litigation with the Justice Department.

June 1995 — The U.S. Court of Appeals reinstates the 1994 antitrust settlement between Microsoft and the Justice Department.

June 1995 — Microsoft and The Softbank Corporation form

GameBank, a joint venture created to publish and promote computer game software for Windows '95. Kingsoft, an Illinois-based software developer, is signed on to handle porting of popular pre-existing arcade games. (Ed. note — for more information, see the Kingsoft article on p.38)

July 17, 1995 — Microsoft announces that Windows '95 has been released for manufacturing.

the key desktop applications, including information and monetary transfers, and to exact a toll on every such transaction. If we allow Microsoft to set this precedent...the result will be decreased consumer choice, higher prices and a serious threat to our nation's technological lead in these areas. We fully believe that Justice will find that legal steps should and must be taken..."

Microsoft's response came the next day from Senior Vice President of Law and Corporate Affairs, William H. Neukom. Addressed to the three on-line executives, it reads in part: "To promote MSN, Microsoft has decided to include access software for the new service as a feature of Windows '95. Windows '95 users can try the MSN service, if they would like to do so. Consumers who try MSN can subscribe, if they would like to do so. You are afraid that if lots of Windows '95 users try MSN, large numbers of them may like it and decide to subscribe. Why is that bad for consumers and for competition?"

"If, as we believe, MSN will offer consumers innovative features and good value, MSN will be successful. If not, it won't. Consumers will decide, based on the content and pricing of the service, not on whether they received their access software with Windows '95, pre-installed on a new computer, by mail on a floppy disk, by downloading off the Internet or in other ways."

The letter concludes, "Consumers benefit when businesses compete to create great technology and bring it to the market at low prices. This is what we aim to do. I think you should do the same, rather than colluding to mount elaborate media and political campaigns aimed at thwarting Microsoft's efforts to broadly disseminate its MSN technology to consumers who might like to try it."

With all the rhetorical gungling, it's easy to lose sight of the fact that on-line computing will be a \$2 billion market by the year 2000. With that much money going over the wire, there has to be room for at least four competitors, doesn't there? Says Compuserve spokesperson Jan Bowers, "We feel there's room in the market. The beef all three major network services have

with Microsoft is that they are

installing MSN on the operating system, so when the users buy a computer with Windows '95, they're going to see the Microsoft Network first. They'll have to go down several layers to get to the others."

"That's not true," responds Microsoft spokesman Greg Shaw. "It depends on how OEMs and customers set up their desktops. You can set up your desktop so that all of the on-line services pop-up together. The MSN access feature is going to be provided. The user clicks a button, they're asked for their credit card number...it's like any of the other services. The Justice Department could challenge us at any time, but they would have to go before a judge with an immediate, compelling reason to stop us."

Exit, Stage Unknown

Not content to let AOL and the others court legislators alone, Bill Gates had several private meetings in late July with President Clinton, White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta, and Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich. While details of the meetings were kept secret,

Sen. Gannett, 468, made his feelings on the subject known in a recent *Wired* interview: "I would want to see predatory-type behavior and a capacity to maintain a monopoly (on Microsoft's part) before I was worried. All we see right now are theoretical worries by a lawyer and the Department of Justice about a system that doesn't exist yet."

Even if everyone in the executive branch shares his sympathies, there's very little that Neut or anyone could do to interfere with an investigation.

Most pundits agree that there will be further investigation and that an injunction to halt the distribution of the Microsoft Network could come at any time. If that happens, industry watchers predict Microsoft would be blocked from shipping Windows '95 bundled with MSN until a trial could decide the matter. Depending on the court's caseload, a trial might take up to a year to proceed. As this issue goes to press, no action has been taken by Antitrust Chief Anne Bingaman, but the Department of Justice supposedly has a strong case to bring before a judge. On July 30, Bill Gates told reporters that he did not expect an injunction, but did not know for sure if that would change. "We don't know all of their thoughts on this," he said.

You Make The Call

No matter what happens, Microsoft will continue to dominate the corporate computing landscape in the foreseeable future.

Some would argue that the U.S. should be glad that Microsoft is a local boy, doing well in an increasingly competitive world market, while others would call Microsoft's business ethics crooked. While the government has a lot of influence in these matters, it's consumers who'll eventually give the thumbs-up or thumbs-down on MSN. On Aug. 24, the release date of Windows '95, computer users will, ostensibly, get their first look. ■

"You are afraid that if lots of Windows '95 users try MSN, large numbers of them may like it."

THIS IS THE FUN PART



Tiny Kinesoft Development Is About to Experience a Growth Spurt

Success is not new to Peter Sills and Mark Achler, founders and owners of Kinesoft Development. Both have taken small businesses and built them into thriving enterprises before. This time, though, it's a little different. "I have never had this much fun in my years in the industry," confesses Mark Achler. "This is just really...great. Softbank invested \$12 million for a minority share of our company, plus the contracts we've signed to develop games for other companies are over and above that to a huge amount; we have access to the best games, the best distribution, we're well capitalized. We're having...this is just the best."

It's easy to understand if words sometimes escape the two thirtysomething designer/entrepreneurs.

Peter Sills, 33, and Mark Achler, 37, are equal partners in Kinesoft Development Corporation, the software design house they started four years ago. Last month, Kinesoft was partially acquired by Japanese distribution giant Softbank, to develop games in a deal with Microsoft. Gamebank, as the venture is known, will focus on port-

ing over top-selling Japanese video games to the Windows 95 PC market.

During our extended telephone interview, Sills and Achler worked well as a team, comfortably fielding questions and occasionally finishing each other's sentences. They've been friends for more than a decade, and it shows.

Some people think going into a deal with the world's largest software maker and distributor would be scary for a little company like Kinesoft. Don't mistake their excitement for nervousness.

"I've done this before," says Achler. "This isn't scary, this is the fun part."

"These are the kind of worries you like to have, right?" Sills asks.

BY THEIR BOOTSTRAPS

When Kinesoft began, it had the same goal that all other small businesses have: stay in business.

"Initially," Sills explains, "we were look-

ing for market holes: things that weren't being provided in the multimedia and entertainment side. When we started up, the MPC-I upgrade kits were just starting to ship, and I had noticed there was no CD audio program in there, so we produced a product called WinCD Professional, which allows you to catalog and play all your CDs through your CD-ROM drive."

Now, Kinesoft is poised to explode in size and productivity, with contracts to port games from the most successful game developers in Japan. What brought them to this point?

"A little more than a year ago," Sills responds, "I bought a Sega Genesis for my son and was a little bit irked at the fact that I had a \$4,000 computer sitting on my desk, and I needed a \$200 game machine to run games because it did a much better job than the computer."

"I'd been doing video games for a long time and realized that it was a software problem and not a hardware problem. The PC has infinitely more power than your \$200 video game console. What we did was create a set of technologies that are aimed at bringing the video game function to PCs."

"Accessibility was also a big issue," adds Achler. "We felt that a significant barrier to PC gaming was the accessibility for the end user. When you want to play a video game, you plug a cart into the machine and go. Prior to Windows 95, when you played a computer game, you had to have all the drivers, you had to make sure the sound card was working, etc. The installation process is such a pain. Plus, most of these PC games have some serious learning to get into the game."

"We wanted to create consumer-friendly software," Sills says. "Computer games generally require that you invest a significant portion of your life in that game. The reason console titles sell so many more units is because you can play them for five minutes and put them down. There's [usually] no manual required; they're easy to understand. You don't have to invest your life; they are strictly entertainment."

"Any kid can plug in a cartridge," remarks Achler, "but it usually takes a pretty frustrat-

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ed parent to figure out how to install a computer game."

Sills goes one step further. "We got the DOS version of one of the top-selling fighting games that has been converted to the PC. It took our programmers, who've been in this industry for many, many years, the better part of a day to even get it up and running on their best machine, and it still didn't run right. That is the problem we set out to address."

PLUG ME, PLAY ME

Anyone who ever tried to install a video card or ventured far into the user-unfriendly wasteland of DOS knows that compatibility and ease-of-use have always been the two great lies of DOS and Windows. Has true plug and play finally come to the computer with Win95?

"With our game *Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure*," Sills answers, "you put the disc in, and the computer asks you if you want to play. That's it. If your machine runs Win95 and you have a 486 processor, the game will run. No question. There's no issues with RAM requirement, with video cards, etc. It's about the most Windows compatible, compliant product that you will see on the market."

Of course, there was more at work than Peter and Mark's desire to see playable, quality games on the PC. "Games are the only large market (on the PC) where there is not a dominant player," Sills remarks. "It would be crazy for someone today to go into the spreadsheet or word processing marketplace, so when you look at marketing opportunities, there are computer games, but computer games really are not a tremendously large business in the grand scope of software."

"PC games in 1994 did \$500 million dollars total," cites Achler. "Sega and Nintendo, depending on whose numbers you look at, did somewhere between \$4-4.5 billion last year. So, the market opportunities for games were significant."

"WE'RE JUST THE DESIGNERS"

The pair can't talk about the games they will be doing, mainly because they aren't sure what all of them will be. "We're just the designers," Achler shrugs.

"Gamebank is choosing the games to be ported over," explains Sills. "The games will be high profile, they'll be the top games in the market and they will perform on Windows in a fashion that you won't ever see on the console machines. Choosing the games is not difficult. The difficulty is, the PC is not designed in any way, shape or form to be a good video game platform. Our proprietary Exodus software creates a series of function libraries that create the basic video game functions inside the PC, without putting overhead on hardware requirements for

"Obviously, that's the next step right?" asks Achler. "In Japan, where most of these games are coming from, the 'hot' games right now are 3-D driven games, so you can probably guess where our marching orders are."

"You will eventually see games from us. Right now, as part of the Gamebank relationship, we've signed deals with the top 20 game companies to move their titles over to Windows 95. That will occupy the majority of our time for some time," Peter says dryly. "We are currently the only game developer for Gamebank, but if they grow as quickly as I think they're going to grow, we may have to expand even more or sublicense our technology, which we've already started discussing."

LAUGHING ALL THE WAY TO THE GAMEBANK

Softbank wasn't the first company to come knocking at Kinesoft's door looking for a Win95 game developer. They had other offers from corporate behemoths IBM, Intel and others. What did Softbank have that IBM didn't?

"Just the greatest people," answers Sills. "I'll tell you a little story. It was Friday at E. We had our attorneys in New York with signature pages to do a deal with IBM, when we met the gentlemen from Softbank for the first time. Halfway through that dinner they asked us to get on a plane to go to Japan to talk about business opportunities. In Japan, they informed us about the upcoming Gamebank deal, and basically asked us if they could put this deal together. We worked out an agreement in about 45 minutes on three hand-written sheets of paper [for] the deal."

"From the day we first met them to the day that all the legal documents were signed and the money changed hands was 13 days," says Achler, "not even two weeks. Softbank knew what they wanted to do and they put their money where their mouth was."

"It also helped that Bill Gates had given Softbank a personal recommendation to us," Sills adds. "When Bill says, 'You guys should do something,' you listen." ●



"I have never had this much fun in my years in the industry," confesses Mark Achler.

video cards or anything of that nature."

Well, since this is 1995, one should finally expect a \$2,000 computer to outperform a marked-down-to-\$85, 16-Bit video gaming system. What we want to know is, are games on the PC going to challenge the high-end consoles, like the Sony PlayStation or the Sega Saturn?

"If you were standing in my office right now," Sills responds, "you would know the answer to that question, but, just...no comment." [Both laugh.]



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Never Mind the Bullocks

I don't swim in your toilet, so don't pee in my pool."

It's an old saying that makes a lot of sense, especially to pool owners. Since most of the millionaire movie producers and studio heads in Hollywood own pools, they might want to think about that adage the next time someone suggests another Internet-based cyberbore.

There's a reason why movies are shown on big screens with big speakers in big rooms with the lights off instead of being shown over the Internet. The reverse of that line of reasoning might be able to explain why this summer's Net-based movies have, for the most part, been as interesting as a mouse pad. They look clever and decorative, but all they really do is lay there.

The Net marks the second consecutive cyber-flick this summer to pee in the movie-going public's pool. It was made watchable only by its rising star, the charming and delightful Sandra Bullock.

Tinseltown's leading lady of the month plays Angela Barrett, a reclusive programming troubleshooter who free-lances for the fictional software mega-company, Cathedral Systems.

From working and chatting with friends to ordering pizzas, Angela lives her life on the Internet, but when she comes into possession of a disk containing a program that enables a group of hacker terrorists to break into any database in the world, the people around her mysteriously start dying of unnatural causes. The terrorists want their disk back, and they want her as dead as a Commodore VIC-20.

In this cross between *War Games* and *The Pelican Brief*, Angela is pursued through cellular phone signals and Internet activity—and finally flushed out of hiding when she is stripped of her identity. By manipulating her computer

records for everything from credit card companies to police records, she has everything she owns taken away from her, neatly replaced by nothing more than a new name and rap sheet including outstanding warrants for drugs, shoplifting and prostitution.

One thing the film does accomplish in spite of the goofy techno-speak and con-

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frightening
than being behind
the wheel of a
bus."

HARLAN ELLISON

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trived plot twists is scare the bejeezus out of anyone who's become dependent on computers for everyday functions. If you've ever wondered what would happen if the world's most important computer files were somehow corrupted, the Net goes beyond the catastrophic problems in the Pentagon and on Wall Street, and brings

doctor with whom she'd once had an affair, played by Dennis Miller. While unconvinced of her story, he agrees to do what he can to help her, but when his medical records are mysteriously altered, he winds up dead, leaving Angela's only chance of survival through the Net.

Having lived most of her adult life in cyberspace, there are few people who have ever actually met Angela in person that can vouch for her true identity, and when you're trying to expose a masterful conspiracy, mistaken identity can be a real problem.

"Imagine if all of a sudden you're accused of a heinous crime, and all of the evidence is against you," says Bullock. "You don't have anybody in your life who can identify you or serve as an alibi—except for a mom who's got Alzheimer's, and she doesn't even know who you are. Where do you turn?"

While through her

fortable and forthright when she's dealing with what she knows. But once she steps out of her house, she just doesn't want to be out there, because of certain things that have happened to her. Everything's pointed to, *People in society are bad. They'll hurt you emotionally.*"

While the film drags on and on, Bullock's on-screen presence is enough to keep audiences rooting for her. The film takes a convenience approach, which is uncharted territory for fans of *While You Were Sleeping*, and it moves too slowly for fans of *Speed*.

Bullock does a nice job of flexing her acting muscles by carrying the character-driven action-drama, but the subject matter is still how far-fetched for audiences to relate to or care about.

"People in society are bad. they'll hurt you if they can."

it down to long lines at the airport and missing hotel reservations.

As Bullock, a Net-head in her own right, jokes, "It's a lot more frightening than being behind the wheel of a bus!"

"We didn't want to heighten things to a level where Angela comes off as a superhero," says Net producer Rob Cowan. "We wanted to make the situations that she gets herself in and out of as real as

possible.

While on vacation, Angela is seduced by Jack Doyle (played by Jeremy Northam), a smooth-talking Brit, who packs both a lap-top and a pistol.

After a brief high seas romance, Angela discovers that what she thought was a Romeo is more like a Corleone and is forced to escape on a motorized rubber raft. Unfortunately, her getaway is cut short when her raft slams into a cluster of rocks. She wakes up three days later, bruised and battered in a Mexican hospital, and the adventure begins.

The only friend she can turn to is a

work and hobby, something she states in the movie have become one in the same, both producer and Bullock are quick to point out that Angela is a far cry from the stereotypical computer geek.

"One thing that we've highlighted is how [cyberspace] opens up a new social circle that people never would have had," explains Cowan. "Angela spends time on the Net chatlines, because she can either be herself or be somebody else—you can just make up a handle."

"The character isn't really shy, but very isolated," says Bullock. "She's very com-

Like *The Net*'s cyberflick predecessor *Johnny Mnemonic* and its follow-up *Virtuosity*, studios are depending too much on star-power to attract audiences to films dealing with 21st-century technology. It won't be until *Matrix* and *Pop* learn how to speak Internet jargon fluently, and that may not be until cyberpunks are running for president. Maybe the remake will be better.

—by Mike Stokes.

Sandra Bullock and Rob Cowan interviewed by Dean Lamanna

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Kombat

Video Game Everyguy Flips Off Hollywood

Owing to its sheer popularity, use of real-life actors and realistic violence, *Mortal Kombat* is an animal that much of the public remains altogether awed and frightened by—as proven by huge sales as well as a dubious mention in the Senate investigation on video game violence. Whatever your personal feelings about the game, you'd have to agree that *Mortal Kombat* has had a huge impact on American culture.

Rich Divizio himself was no stranger to American icons, having played back-up to some of its more embarrassing ones in *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Secret of the Ooze*. In 1992, Divizio was the first to be asked by Williams-Bally/Midway game designer John Tobias to be filmed and digitized for the original *Mortal Kombat* game.

Between the subsequent home release of *MK* and its sequel *MK2*, the phenomenon soon found its way into over a million homes—and Divizio found his Kano character, if not neck-and-neck with Jesus Christ for presence in American living rooms, at least in the general vicinity.

As the series continued to grow in popularity, the actor made his way through his final years of college, studying computer animation at The American Academy of Art and soon finding work in the field. Interviewed by *FUSION*'s monomaniac Joe Fielder, Divizio speaks out on his feelings about the world's most popular video competition.

What's it like being in nearly as many American homes as the Bible?

Divizio: (laughs) As many homes as a cross on people's walls? How do I feel about it? I dunno, I think it's cool. I think it's awesome. It's a chance that a lot of people don't get in their lifetime. Luckily, I was given the chance to be in the game.



Veteran

Nick Gritz, the man behind World
Kombat's Kama, even has his own action
figure. How many people can say that at
parties?

How has it affected your life?

Well, before *Mortal Kombat* entered my life, as well as all the other characters, we were doing those *Turtle* movies. We didn't know where that was going to take us. At that time I wasn't even aware there were "fighting games." The last thing I'd touched was probably *Tempest*. I knew John Tobias was working on video games, but I didn't even know *Street Fighter* existed 'til John called me one day.

Now I look back and I think about the actual phone call, and I look at how big everything is now—like I'm in all these homes—[and] I'll bet you that the characters weren't even made up when John made that call to me.

Where were you in life when *Mortal Kombat* was being filmed?

When the first *Mortal Kombat* was being filmed I still hadn't entered The American Academy of Art. I was kind of struggling along, trying to decide what I was doing. I had two years of college under my belt (as an) artist, and I didn't know what direction I was going to go. It was a tough time. Even when I

was in The American Academy of Art, sometimes I couldn't even go because I didn't have enough money to get on the bus. I considered riding my bike downtown, but



that would've been like 15 miles there and 15 miles back.

I used to start to think things like, "Maybe, I'm supposed to be poor now, because things will get better later." I'm really glad I grew up that way, instead of being some bastard rich kid who gets everything he wants, doesn't have any street smarts and I'll just be cocky all his life. I run into a lot of people like that. You can tell when you run into people who had to struggle when they were younger—if they shake it, they treat people better.

Did starring in the *Mortal Kombat* games help get you through college?

That was really necessary income. When I'd get a check for filmmaking, I could live off that. It'd really get me by. If I didn't have that, I don't know what I would've done. If you're struggling and you have a minimum-wage job, you can work your ass like a dog and your check is like \$130.

That's why I went back to school.

Some of the other actors seem a little more fame-motivated, but you were more interested in getting through school.

I hung out with a lot of the other guys connected with *Mortal Kombat* through the years, through martial arts. We used to be this martial arts team. I mean, everything we did 24 hours a day was martial arts. After awhile, that got tiring and since I'd been 4 years old, art and drawing has been my love. I know that I was going to do art at some point in my life, like those guys made martial arts their lives.

Mortal Kombat was great, it was like a combination of both my worlds. I did

martial arts and there's computer graphics involved.

Did you ever get kind of starstruck by any of it?

There was a time (when you've been involved in something as big as a major motion picture) being an extra or playing a bit part is going to make you feel like, "Ohhh, I'm going ahead and try to be a star now." Everyone gets a taste of that when they get into that industry. We all did.

Then you really realize that you're not the only one doing it, there's like millions of people who want to be stars. *Mortal Kombat* was something that was growing and we thought that was going to be like that huge step to getting closer to Hollywood, and we were starting to see the stars in our eyes.

I tried to get into the Hollywood thing and it's just so tough. I don't want to say you have to kiss ass, but you have to do that whole schmoozing thing. You have to hang around with the people, you have to do that coffee-thing, you get to do the touch-thing, you have to fake like you're interested in what they're talking about. [Laughs]

I got a taste of that world ... I don't want to say I got a taste of that world with *Teenage Mutant Turtles II*, because that was a great environment. I did get a taste of it when I went for the audition for the *Mortal Kombat* movie. I auditioned for extra roles, like they hadn't got Scorpion yet and they hadn't gotten the Sarraks. I thought that I would go out there and show that I could do a kick-ass performance of being Scorpion or anything else that I could do for the film, since they didn't call and ask if I wanted to play Kano.



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The guy they got kind of looks like "Village People Kane." Not that there's anything wrong with that.

I hope the film is successful, for John and Ed and the people at Williams, but on the other hand, I hope the kids'll be disappointed in a way [that] they'll see Kane and be like, "That's not Kane." Because it's not. They're going to look at Christopher Lambert, who's playing Raiden, and the kids are going to be like, "That's not Raiden." Christopher Lambert looks so stupid.

That whole starstruck thing ... when I got a taste of that whole Hollywood life and how cold and cutthroat it is, it's like I didn't want to be involved. F---k them. They're not willing to give you the chance, f---k them.

That's not what you want to do with your life anyway, is it?
Yeah, I'm really happy doing video games now.

**You can tell when
you run into people who
HAD TO STRUGGLE when
they were younger—if they
make it, THEY TREAT PEOPLE
BETTER.**

What's it like being digitized? Is it a pain in the ass standing around while they film you doing a move?

It's fun. There's nothing to it. It's kind of like a miniature feeling of being a star in front of the camera.

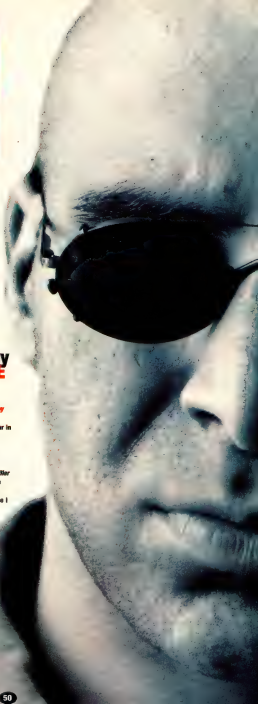
I hear you got recognized a lot. I hear there are a few malls you can't go to anymore.

At lunch the other day, we stepped into a mall to play *Mortal Kombat 3* and *Killer Instinct*. When I got in the quarters for *MK3*, there was this kid on my left side watching me choose Kane. The kid looked at me and said, "Are you choosing Kane because you look like Kane?" And I said, "No, I'm choosing Kane because I am Kane."

He just looked at me, and said, [trembling voice] "Richard Divizio."

"Yep, that's me."

And he ran off, I don't even know where he went. Then he came back with a shitload of other kids, all with little pieces of paper from the counter of the game place and pens. I showed him my driver's license before I signed any autographs and he looked at it and said, "Yep! It's him! It's him!" ●



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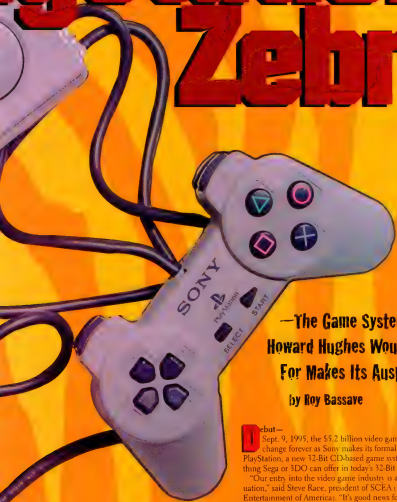


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by Roy Bassave

Debut—
Sept. 9, 1995, the \$5.2 billion video game industry will change forever as Sony makes its formal U.S. debut of the PlayStation, a new 32-Bit CD-based game system destined to rival anything Sega or 3DO can offer in today's 32-Bit technology.
"Our entry into the video game industry is a 'good news/bad news' situation," said Steve Race, president of SCEA (Sony Computer Entertainment of America). "It's good news for anyone interested in video games that, for the first time, make the suspension of disbelief automatic—it will be a graphically realistic dinosaur who attacks you—not a brown blob with feet. For the people selling those other systems, PlayStation creates a bad news situation—period."

SCEA enters a '95 gaming-system colosseum more brutish than a Ben-Hur chariot race. But Sony has several advantages over its competing video jockeys.

The CD-based PlayStation is defining next-generation gaming by being the only system that brings true 3-D graphics to the home through multiple processors and state-of-the-art system architecture. The PlayStation delivers more than 500 MIPS (millions of instructions per second) of power, muscle that until now has been only available on \$50,000 workstations. The upshot: games with three-dimensional realism, CD-quality sound and motion picture-quality special effects that sometimes exceed the graphic quality of arcade versions.

Survival of the Fittest—

SCEA enters a '95 gaming-system colosseum more brutish than a Ben-Hur chariot race. But Sony has several advantages over its competing video jockeys. As an international corporate research and development giant, Sony has the marketing strength and experience to establish itself with lightning speed. And let's not overlook the bullying power of more than \$40 billion in annual sales. Of course, the bottom line for the PlayStation is the quality of the software. A Rolls-Royce is no good without the wheels to move it.

"The PlayStation represents the single largest launch for Sony as a corporation since the launch of the audio CD," says Olaf Olafsson, president of Sony Electronic Publishing Co., SCEA's parent company. "The dedication to developing a superior product, aligning with the best game developers and publishers and our proven marketing abilities as a corporation are a positive sign for what can be expected."

SCEA is part of the nation's largest entertainment company, housing the likes of Sony Music, Michael Jackson (a corporate entity unto himself), Columbia Pictures and Sony Imagesoft. Olafsson

explains that SCEA will solicit the aid of its influential sister companies in an effort to force PlayStation's riches in the gaming industry.

PlayStation's CD-based games will be pressed by the same domestic state-of-the-art plants that churn out millions of audio CDs for Sony's music subsidiaries, Epic and Columbia. As a major developer behind the compact disc, Sony created one of the most profitable innovations of our time. And they'd like the PlayStation to follow suit. But Sony execs are playing their marketing spades with care, fearing that the expensive gaming system might grow into the same cankerous vacuum as that of the Betamax—a video tape-recording system far superior to VHS that failed to catch on with consumers.

explains that SCEA will solicit the aid of its influential sister companies in an effort to force PlayStation's riches in the gaming industry.

Bang For Buck—

"It has always been our intention to introduce the PlayStation to the North American market at an aggressive price that would ensure that as many gamers as possible could experience what the PlayStation is all about," said Steve Race, president of

SCEA. "This just illustrates yet another promise we are delivering on."

At about the cost of a hi-fi VCR or a Clamato blending Veg-O-Matic (\$299), consumers can acquire this most powerful of video game hardware available. PSX's only true competitor is 3DO, who recently reduced the cost of their system in order to match that of the PlayStation. 3DO also re-packaged their system with Crystal Dynamics' Gex as extra bait.

While no game is included with the purchase of a PlayStation, an exclusive interactive sampler disc accompanies the system, featuring the first levels of four of the system's hottest games. Plans also call for up to 20 titles to be released within the month, including *Battle Arena Toshinden* (Takara), *Ridge Racer* (Namco), *Kileak: The DNA Imperative* (SCEA), *Raiden Project* (Namco), *Kokujo Parodius* (Konami).

Perhaps by Christmas this library will begin to rival 3DO's library of over 100 games.

The PlayStation's controller is decidedly unique, in fact, form-fitting for most hands.

Players do, however, end up pushing buttons with two of the fingers needed to hold the controller, and that takes a little getting used to.

Some or all of the following accessories may be available at launch: "combat cables" (which serve to connect two PSX's



the Atari and Sega competitors, accessories such as the sharing cable, games and the six-axis controllers, RFU adapters, RGB cables, S-VHS video cables and interfaces with pads.

From third-party partners come the PS Pad from STD Entertainment (\$29.95, not new), which features eight fire buttons, three speeds of auto fire, three speeds of slow-motion, LED indicators and an extra long cord; and the PS Arcade Joystick (\$39.95, October) with eight full-size fire buttons, a metal base, joystick, slow motion, semi- and auto-fire buttons and an extra long cord. Other arcade sticks will be made available including the ASCII Pad '95, the Fighter Stick '95 and the Sun Controller from Sunsoft.

A History Lesson—

The PlayStation is the result of an early association between the Sony Corp. and Nintendo of Japan in 1993. The PlayStation was the name designated to the Super NES CD-ROM, a peripheral for the Super NES with the sole objective of competing against the Sega CD. Nintendo suddenly annulled the agreement with Sony, and the Super NES CD was shelved beside the unfortunate Betamax. Nintendo opted instead to create its own high-end 64-Bit peripheral called Ultra 64 (due out next spring but currently vaporware).

Sony Corp. was essentially stuck with a working model of the Super NES CD (you'll notice its grey Nintendo hardware coloring). In a fix as to whether or not to abandon the project completely or move on, Sony chose to move on... and upward. They enhanced the machine, joined efforts with LSI Technologies for chip designs and created a video game/electronic media department Sony Computer Entertainment of Japan.

The PlayStation was introduced last May at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E'), the video game industry's swank Los Angeles trade show. The response from the gaming public was nothing short of wonderment... and now, it's finally in the U.S.

Innards—

While the "off-the-shelf" Sega Saturn chips can be found in many home electronic products, the PSX houses a radically enhanced custom chip technology developed exclusively for Sony Computer Entertainment. Additionally, the PSX chassis roams high-speed parallel processing. The result is massive incremental power over video game systems with single processors.

According to Sony, the PSX's multiple main processors deliver such special effects as 3-D polygon graphics; shading, fogging, digital lighting and texture-mapping; rotating and scaling; multiple camera angles; 24-channel CD-quality sound; "stream-through-video" and 16 million colors that

GOOD NEWS.

The Doctor Thinks He Can Help You.

paint the most realistic game environments ever available.

The look of most early game releases is three dimensional, an impressive feature of the system. Equally as impressive is an idea the PlayStation borrowed from the Neo-Geo system. Instead of saving games on internal RAM memory, Sony created separate memory cards that, ostensibly, can save a game that can be taken to a friend's house for continued play.

Namco's Tekken looks better than the arcade version because it's the first game ever created on System 11 hardware—a 3-D Polygon arcade hardware system jointly developed by Namco and Sony that enables the PlayStation to replicate arcade versions perfectly. As a result of Sony's co-development of CD technology, they can rely on its proprietary CD-based architecture to give the PlayStation significant benefits over competing systems. Not only is it considerably less expensive to manufacture game titles in the CD format, the turnaround time is about one-tenth the time of a masked-ROM game cartridge.

PlayStation Invades Japan—

If the PlayStation's reception in the United States is anything near what was experienced in Japan, Sony will have reason to break out the bubbly. Following its

early December 1994 debut, more than 300,000 PlayStation units were sold in one month's time, making the PlayStation the best-selling next-generation system in Japan.

After just five months on the market, Sony Computer Entertainment of Japan achieved its preliminary target of selling 1 million units. And the software is selling, on average, at a splendid four-to-one ratio to the hardware system. Hit titles in Japan include chart toppers *Ridge Racer* and *Tekken* from Namco; *Toshinden* by Takara; *Parodius* by Konami; *Kileak: The Blood* from Sony Music Entertainment (Japan) and Sony Computer Entertainment's own, *Jumping Flash*.

Third-Party Alliances—

SCEA has signed with over 300 developers and publishers worldwide to be PlayStation licensees. This includes many of the industry's leading publishers and developers such as Acclaim, Capcom, Crystal Dynamics, Electronic Arts, Imagesoft, Interplay, Konami, LucasArts, Mindscape, Namco Hometek, Pygnosis, SSI, Time Warner Interactive, Viacom and Virgin.

"It's significant that virtually all of the most important gaming software companies are working on games for PlayStation," says

Bernie Stolar, SCEA vice president of business development. "We know that these licensees have their 'A' teams working on PlayStation and that ours is the system of choice for these developers. That says a lot for what PlayStation customers can expect."

The Word From the People—

"We're anxiously awaiting PlayStation's release," says Michele Roper, store manager of Electronics Boutique, Omni Branch, Miami, FL. "Though Sega's Saturn sold off the shelf in its first month, sales did slow in late summer. While 3DO was making a slight comeback in July and August, customers believe in Sony's reputation for top-of-the-line products and feel that with hit games in Japan coming to the U.S. like *Ridge Racer* and *Tekken* from Namco and *Toshinden* by Takara, it's an important purchase for the serious gamer."

The industry's software developers seem to mirror these beliefs as well.

"Sony has created an outstanding interactive hardware unit and Acclaim is supporting it with compelling, high-profile titles," comments Robert Holmes, president of Acclaim. "We are excited about developing software for Sony's premier home gaming system."

Namco has one of the most extensive

"virtually all of the important gaming software companies are working on

Racer-

Take the Competition by the Throat

Sony Race is president and CEO of Sony Computer Entertainment in America in the U.S., where he's responsible for the day-to-day operations of SCEA, including management, licensing and software release planning. Perhaps even more importantly, Race is also in charge of PlayStation's assault on Sega's and Nintendo's empire, companies for which he's worked in

the past. For a split, he seems like a fairly decent guy. He was interviewed by FUSION's Jon Bosche in late July.

What did you intend to accomplish with Sony and the PlayStation?

At Sony we're not more polyglot than any other system, plus more video capabilities than any of our line bears. Are all the new-generation machines not today or [any] coming to the market in the next future.

But not only do we bring all this to the game (in the form of the PlayStation), but we also bring the whole heritage of Sony. Everything that it stands for—all the ingredients that are part of the Sony mix. Whether it's our artists, our film library or our music, the quality and reputation that Sony has and all the infrastructure that supports it in terms of service, repairs and just the perception of what Sony is as a brand.

Why did Sony enter the video game arena five years after the 16-bit systems started?

Well, we've been looking at the video game industry for some time. In the past, there was room for almost everyone to get into the industry with Nintendo back in the mid-'80s. We've been sitting on a working model we thought was a product that could really revolutionize the industry. It was the basis for the PlayStation.

Last May, Sega shocked the video game world with the unexpected entry into the 32-bit arena. Their new 32-bit Saturn was a surprise. It was a shock to the rest of the industry. I think Sega's going to win. They have just a

libraries of high-end entertainment arcade titles in the world," says Yoshi Homma, president of Namco Hometek. "Because of the technology and the opportunity that the PlayStation offers, it was the obvious choice for our entry into next-generation gaming."

And Now, a Word From the Competition—

Sega doesn't mince words about their feelings on the PlayStation.

"We really like to play our great software on Sony TVs," remarks Tom Kalanski, Sega of America chairman. "They should stick to making TVs until they learn to make great software, not by their third-party licensees. Then they would have the credentials to market new video game hardware."

Nintendo, on the other hand, seems to defer to their opponent (they can afford to, their next-generation system isn't out yet), while still managing to sneak in a barb about the Sega Saturn.

"Sony will be a very big competitor," foretells Howard Lincoln, chairman of Nintendo of America. "I think the PlayStation is a better piece of hardware than the Sega Saturn and that is the consensus of our people at Nintendo—the game players [and] technical people."

And now a word from Sony's Steve Race...

Games for PlayStation™

place of the market and his this allowed Sony's marketing strategy to be more...

One of my original concerns when I came into the business was that being Sony was like "my father's Oldsmobile," and it's just not the case. When you go out to businessmen and say "Who do you expect next generation's video game systems from?" Immediately they say Nintendo and Sega. Those are logical. Then we ask who else will do it [and] they say, "Sony."

We are the third or fourth recognized brand in the world. The consumers feel that Sony can create games and that the software companies they've signed up can create state-of-the-art games. Our third-party partners like EA, Crystal Dynamics, and Archipel are coming out with games that are exclusive to our platform. [And] Namco's Ridge Racer or Tekken show the capabilities of our systems.

We're in the software business, we're not the second or third largest record company in the world [and] last time I looked we had a 24 percent share of the market for movies in the United States. So we're really in a software and hardware company.

And our consumers are going to love this.



BAD NEWS.

His Name Is Dr. Frankenstein.

STARRING TIM CURRY COMING THIS FALL

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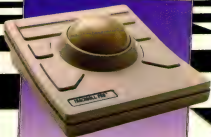


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TOP 10 Things the PLAYSTATION isn't

10



air filter

After a 10-minute road test, the PSX melted and dripped plastic into the engine.

5

When you stare into the PSX, the PSX doesn't look back. Realism isn't even had it so hard.



the void

9

The PlayStation is dangerous when thrown. It hit our editorial director right in the eye.

frisbee



4

longtime companion

We tried selling the PlayStation about all of our problems, but they fell on deaf ears.



8



web shooter

All we have to say is: C-A-T-O-S cracks just like flies, my son!

3

After a few moments, our canine friend, Bishop, completely lost interest in the PSX.



dog toy

7

This hot rod slowed right over the PSX, not slowing down at all.



speed bump

2



coffee-maker

Don't expect a good cup of joe from the PlayStation, it makes lousy coffee.

6



incubator

Our cloning experiments were unsuccessful due to the PlayStation failing to maintain a proper temperature.

1

small intestine

The transplant was a complete failure and the patient was soon lost. Damn you, PSX!



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VIRTUAL WE



he latest casino in the world has no walls, no ceiling and no floor. It doesn't even have a rhinestone-clad woman named Dot hogging three slot machines, blowing smoke in your face.

and screaming for another double scotch in a raspy voice.

As a matter of fact, the whole joint is held together with nothing but Net. ♦ ♦ ♦

Compulsive gamblers, especially the ones who took up exploring the Internet as a means to take their minds off betting, better beware. The only thing standing between them and a relapse are the Web site addresses scattered throughout the next few pages.

Whether you're

preparing for a trip to Vegas, casino night at home, or a last-minute escape to the back rooms of Louisiana, some of these sites can give beginners and seasoned heads experience.

There are plenty of money-making and losing sites that go well beyond your basic knowledge of the rules, regulations and terms of Internet casino betting like slot machines.

Gambling on the Net is about as old as the Internet itself, but until now it's been mostly limited to simple betting on numbers and

cards on the small number of sites in the early days of the Internet. Recently, the major players have entered the market, and a whole new night of betting has been born. ♦ ♦ ♦

in to Bill Gates' bank book. With nothing to lose, however, the games are being as exciting as ever, though not as addictive as 3D slot machines.

Virtual casino games like International Sports International Ltd. and the Internet Gaming Services Ltd. are hoping to usher the virtual 21st century by smokeing the position as the most exciting virtual casino on the Web. Other notable legal players on the Internet include the real Las Vegas.

"The Internet provides a growing virtual casino, explains Scott International's Marketing Director, Michael Bennett.

"In virtual casinos, you can win or lose on the Internet, play 3D slot machines, playing virtual games



Internet Gambling: Big Deal or a Load of Craps?

by Mike Stokes

AS OF THIS

are used to. Entertainers are expected to participate in chat lines without why anyone would want to talk to a chess-loving impersonator or a comedian and hangouts like *Miss M's* and *Miss M's* and *Miss M's*. Not users are going to be able to do it on-line.

In the case of Global Gaming Service's *WagerNet*, a \$100 set-up fee is charged for the on-money hardware and software, and members are issued a security card to access the site.

Sports International will set up accounts for members and issue on-line security cards. Check the fine print before placing bets.

The

Caribbean company already operates one of the successful sports books that have been popping up in the net in the past few weeks. In which gamblers place sports bets by using their picks then wiring in the money to cover it. That may be, but it's about to change and allow patrons daily action.

This may be good news for sports gamblers, but it's potentially bad news for illegal bookmakers. While the minimum bet of \$50 is usually required for sporting events, a service fee of only 2.5 percent is charged rather than the standard 10 percent the bookies charge.

How can this be legal? It all depends on how you interpret the law.

"When you open an account with us, your money is based in Antigua, so the money gets transferred in and out of your account. At any point in time, you can ask to collect your winnings, and we will send you a bank check or wire transfer," explains Jeff Fels, vice president of Intersphere (the company that designs and develops Sports International's gambling

sites). "Since there are no gambling transactions going across state or international lines, there's no problem as far as people placing wagers from anywhere."

"I don't profess to be an expert on [Internet gambling], but



<http://www.us.com/blackjack/bj.html>



we see the advertisements, and obviously it causes us some concern," says Ron Asher, chief of enforcement for the state of Nevada Gaming Control Board. "I think in most instances they're ... violations of federal law," Asher challenges. "There may be some exceptions out there, depending on where they're calling from. But as a general rule, it's operating a gambling business. It doesn't seem to be regulated, and that causes us some concern."

"I think at some point there will be a legal battle over it," warns Scott Beaudin, chief deputy attorney general of the State of Nevada's Gaming Division.

"The way things have been going as far as gambling in the States is concerned, the government's really been easing up on wagering, and our position is they're not going to be doing anything against it," retorts Felt. "I mean, what can the United States government do to regulate something that's global? The only thing they can do is prohibit things

from being done in the States. The Internet is international."

This does not, however, open the door for local bookies to begin taking bets through a computer legally.

"The law as far as we researched it—and I think it's the general consensus—is that the real legality issue falls on not the person placing the wager, but the potential bookmaker," explains Browne. "Being a foreign corporation, being licensed in a foreign country, we're really subject to the laws and regulations of the country that we're in. I think this is why a lot of these corporations that have popped up go in to countries that allow for casino gaming, sports books, etc., and have an industry that's regulated to some extent."

"The whole idea is that we're really immune to U.S. policy as we operate as a foreign corporation. Consequently, we have a relationship that works legally."

Asher, however, advises potential gamblers to remain cautious of

"I would be very hesitant to put money on account ... for some place halfway across the world. ... I know as long as I lose, they're going to keep taking my action, but if I win will they send my money?"

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<http://www.betaxs.com/people/sportbet/casino.htm>

"What can the United States government do to regulate something that's global? ... The Internet is international. It's not owned by anyone in the States."

bookmakers operating thousands of miles away.

"From my standpoint, if I was going to bet money, I would like to know that ... when I won, also be able to collect," he says. "I would be very hesitant to put money on account or use a card for some place halfway across the world where there is no regulation. I know as long as I lose, they're going to keep taking my action, but if I win will they send my money?"

"A lot of this Internet stuff and these Internet casinos," Asher continues, "who knows who owns them? What is their reputation? Where do the proceeds go to from a bookmaking standpoint. At one time at least, most of the profits went to, or at least alleged to, organized crime and ultimately into the drug market and other kinds of criminal activities. I just don't think it's good business to have non-regulated and non-enforceable kind of gaming."

While parties are split on the legality of Netbetting, for the most part, it is simply illegal to call in bets in the United States. On the other hand, these types of bets are not called in over the telephone, and they're not going from state to state.

"That's why these places have popped up," says Browne. "That's what's created this niche in the market that everyone's trying to exploit."

Legal issues aside, ethical concerns also pop-up when gambling is made easy.

A certain hotbed of Netbetting will be universities, where both the Internet and sports gambling have already proven to be extremely popular ways to spend time away from the library. Numerous gambling sites emanate from campuses. At one site, a student tops the list of hands played with over 60,000. Apparently, he's majoring in blackjack.

Hopfully, students will stop short of letting their senior year's tuition ride on a pair of aces, but another potential problem with Internet gambling will be kids that are betting their allowance.

Commonly scrutinized for giving youngsters access to other social sins, such as pornography, the Internet is not extremely popular right now among gaming regulators. If it's possible to turn a small office in the Caribbean into

the world's largest casino, it's certainly possible for a kid to transform himself into a virtual adult in cyberspace.

In the state of Nevada, residents place bets over the phone, but they must first register with state authorities and prove that they are of legal age to gamble. On the Internet, citizens of the world can gamble without proof of anything other than that they have access to money and a computer. There is simply no concrete means of keeping a 12-year-old kid in Idaho or Istanbul from trying his luck at a virtual blackjack table.

"[We] ask our members to sign and swear that they are 18 years of age or older," explains Browne. "We have the same system that everyone else has used, and that's unfortunately about all we can do to regulate it."

Erb sees simple economics as what will keep kids away.

"You have to open an account with us in order to place a bet, and an account starts at \$300 and the next is \$2,000. [That] alone pretty much eliminates the random kid from gambling."

It is also economics that will keep these casinos going strong. As anyone who's spent any significant amount of time in a casino can attest, gamblers usually wind up leaving a lot more dough than they take out of it. With virtually no overhead other than an initial investment, they are relatively inexpensive to set up and the potential for profit is boundless.

"It's a hell of a lot cheaper than building a casino," Browne says with a laugh.

Though certainly a competitor for wagged dollars, one thing both sides agree on is that only the most optimistic Netheads expect gambling on the Internet to put casinos out of business. At least not yet.

"What it'll do is enable the people who want to place small wagers—or are just interested in having a good time one night—it'll give them the ability to go and place a bet. If somebody lives in Missouri, and they want to play a game of blackjack for an hour or so, they're not going to drive to Nevada to go to a casino to play.

"People will always go to casinos, just because of the atmosphere," Erb adds. "I think people generally go there for that anyway." ■

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IN THE NET

THE STREETS OF CYBERSPACE ARE PAVED WITH GOLD!

NET PROFIT

by Mike Stokes

For a truly unique scavenger hunt, CompuServe Inc. and Internet Direct are holding a contest in which surfers can win a wide variety of prizes.

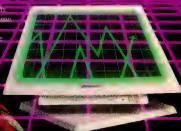
The biggest prize is going on to exorbitant heights: The **CompuServe Internet Hunt** (<http://hunt.compuServe.com>) launched in July and continues through Oct. 27, a million dollars worth of cash and prizes will be awarded to registered members who can answer weekly questions in the categories of news, sports, travel, entertainment, marketplace and technology.

To register, Net users must fill out a questionnaire, after which they will be given a personal ID code to identify their answers from the rest.

Every Friday at 5 p.m. EST, five new questions are posted with hyperlinks that will lead scavenger-hunters to the answers they need.

The 19,000 prizes that will be given away throughout the contest's duration change weekly as well, with a grand prize of \$20,000 going to one winner.

Another less exciting scavenger hunt open to Net users is the **Great Internet Hunt**. Scavenger Hunt (<http://www.adameys.com/adameys/hotlinkback/hunt.htm>), in which surfers wander through the Internet Direct shopping mall. By visiting various product's web-sites, (products from software to throat spray are available) it is a lot like CompuServe's in that players discover answers to a set of questions. It falls far short of CompuServe's entry,



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THE NET

however, when it comes to prizes, offering an official "Hell and Back on the Internet."

T-shirt to lucky winners. But hey, a free shirt is better than a punch in the nose, any day.

Net users aren't the only ones on a scavenger hunt, however. By taking part in these contests, companies are also hunting for potential customers. They're banking on the idea that their participation in these Internet hunts will give them both exposure to a well-defined demographic, and it allows them to test the waters of a medium with explosive advertising potential.

Entry surveys to register scavenger hunt participants also provide the same type of information as direct mailing

it is a home. Two houses to be exact, on 60 acres of "lush meadow and timber" worth approximately \$400,000.

There is a catch, however. Both houses are located in Northern Idaho.

One of the coolest trivia games on the Net is **Net's Two Minute Warning** (<http://www.dtd.com/tmw/2m>), in which players march their teams down the field by answering football trivia questions of different difficulty levels. The prizes are limited to auto-graphed footballs and hats, but the game itself is fun for sports trivia fanatics.

Beauties and the Beasts



Internet users can also offer no prizes but are worth checking out for funnies are:

The Ugly Contest (<http://www.gawki.com/sleevingly/>) and **The Babe Test** (<http://www.babetest.com/>). In the Ugly Contest, attractive female models' guys are featured, and participants are asked to vote on who they think is uglier. Although there's really no wrong answer, participants

have some loud opinions about them. As Fred Sanford would say, "You could dip them

finger into alcohol and make people vomit."

The Babe Test, on the other hand, is at the other end of the spectrum. It tests identification skills by showing photos of well-known Hollywood stars. The Babe Test includes 10 photos with one choice next to each. After and some correct responses are tallied, and answers are given to insure

the bulk of these games are shallow attempts at humor and may be offensive to people who believe that beauty can be deep (especially really ugly people who think that way), they can still be a lot of mindless fun. ♦



CompuServe



2-MINUTE WARNING


surveys that the Internet is hoping to render obsolete. By nullifying costly postage rates, the Net allows companies to spend money a little more wisely, like on prizes.

Another way to bring home free loot is by testing your useless knowledge in contests.

In the **American Dream contest** (<http://metada.com/dream/>), there are several cash prizes, but the grand prize is something you can't take home with you, because

Another contest with a cool prize is the **Smartest Guy in the World Contest** (<http://www.neresternmicro.com/httdm/game.html>), where one lucky winner will be awarded 12 round-trip tickets to anywhere in the world that American Airlines flies.

A listing of contests, giveaways and surveys is located in the Entertainment section of the **Yahoo site** (<http://www.yahoo.com>). Happy Hunting! ♦



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CULTURE SHOCK

IMPARTIAL REVIEWS OF THE LATEST IN INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT

TANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

Lori Petty holds the free world in an iron fist ... Well, not really ...

The year is 2033, a decade or so after a huge comet turned the Earth into a steaming desert. What little water there is left on the planet is mostly controlled by the fascist Water and Power Company, run by a spiky-haired Malcolm McDowell. But McDowell's dreams for world domination run into a roadblock in the form of a post-punk Lori Petty.

From out of the pages of Britain's *Deadline* comic comes *Tank Girl*, a lewd, cheeky, aggressively sexual heroine with a weakness for human/kangaroo mutants and military assault vehicles. In the comic, T.G. was a feisty nymphette goddess who was willing to take extreme measures to achieve her goals, which usually meant a hefty stack of burnt and bloody fascists by the final page. Here—played with goofy panache by Lori Petty—she remains much the same, a dirt-minded Lucille Ball via day-glo Terminator.

Director Rachel Talalay is clearly a fan of the comic, seeing how she takes every opportunity to drop in comic graphics as sequence transitions throughout the film. These, along with animated snippets, show the power and sheer joy of the colorful and haughty print source material, and suggests that an animated feature would have had more punch and pizzazz than the uneven live-action effort.

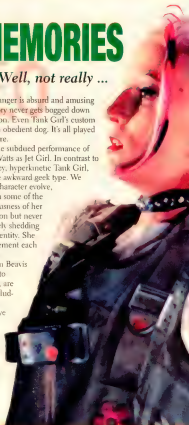
Indeed, it's the comic-book sensibility that keeps the

movie interesting. The danger is absurd and amusing rather than scary. The story never gets bogged down by logic or characterization. Even *Tank Girl*'s custom tank comes to her like an obedient dog. It's all played for kicks and nothing more.

Also worth noting is the subdued performance of Naomi Watts as Jet Girl. In contrast to the ballsey, hyperkinetic *Tank Girl*, Jet is the awkward geek type. We see her character evolve, taking on some of the outrageousness of her companion but never completely shedding her own identity. She and *Tank Girl* complement each other almost perfectly.

Fun moments, from Beavis and Butt-head-style jokes to Hollywood insider asides, are scattered throughout, including brief appearances by familiar faces. Keep an eye out for Iggy Pop in a creepy cameo while James Hong plays another weird character. Overall, it's a fun movie—and it's really hard to fault it for having very little substance to get in the way.

—Frank Kurtz



JUST LIKE A KEG OF PEE

N.I.L.S.'s new album *Eumuch* is probably best summed up as punk funk with a bit of ska to boot. It's the better parts of bands like Operation Ivy, Bad Brains and the Descendents somehow mixed together into a workable whole.

Full of energy and charisma, N.I.L.S. offers one of the most powerful and entertain-

ing live acts in the small club scene right now.

Unfortunately, the recording process for *Eumuch* has proven enervating in that kinetic style, often dampening down the band's unique sound. Songs like *Cathedral of Erotic Misery* and *Invisible* are strangely tame compared to the strength with which they're put out live.

But even with these drawbacks, *Eumuch* remains a strong and moving album. The funkish, rousing *Hobgoblinspeakadelic*, *Porno Star* (which includes the catchy and undeniable observation: "Lemonade at the state fair—just like a keg of pee!") and the upbeat, girl trouble-ridden *Balled Up Into One* easily knocks out much of what's

HELL BENT FOR LEATHER

Those who've truly experienced the thrill of the open road know that there are few things in this world as exciting as having a hog rumbling between your legs. This white-line fever has proved so addictive and attractive that those who partake

have a cult following of wanna-bes. For those who fall into that latter category, here's the next best thing to actually being there.

If you've ever wondered how bikers can handle the chaffing that coarse pig hair must cause on their thighs, you should quit watching *Hard Copy* and TNN and climb aboard *Full Throttle*.

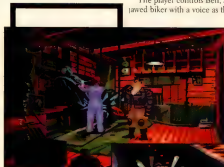
LucasArts' *Full Throttle* computer game is loosely based on the biker-gang lifestyle that Harley-Davidson owners like to follow, though players ride two-wheelers from "Corley Motors" instead. As the popularity of its hogs forced Corley Motors to grow in size, Old Man Corley had to go public to keep up with the production demand.

Forced to expand, Corley hires Adrian

Ripburger, a stiff-lipped, neo-Nazi corporate type, to run the operation. But Adrian has a different idea of how to run Corley Motors (he dreams of mini-vans), and Old Man Corley soon finds himself in the way of this fiendish yuppie scheme.

The player controls Ben, a burly, square-jawed biker with a voice as thick as slate and as

low as the rumble from his Corley bike (which combine to make your subwoofer stand up and beg for mercy). Ben's gang has been kidnapped and framed for the old man's murder—and only



TECH SPECS

- GENRE: Action
- SYSTEM: PC/CD-ROM
- THEME: Adventure
- HD SPACE: 1 MB
- PLAYERS: 1
- DEVELOPER: LucasArts

12345

Ben knows the truth. But he'll have a tough road ahead of him to get to the shareholders meeting to stop Adrian.

Players must find a series of clues, piece them together to accomplish a variety of tasks and thus save the world from the threat of minivan overload. A worthy cause (for bike lovers, at least), and a first-rate game.

—Sadie Hammer

mean?"), it doesn't really matter. The band's forceful, emotional sound at its best makes the lyrics almost irrelevant. Singer Jeff Williams has that sort of thick, throaty voice that, when backed by his jacked-up band at full crank, causes the listener to disregard the nonsensical words—it's still pretty damn cool.

—Joe Fielder

★ N.I.L.8 ★



MUNCH

N.I.L.8

- Enamuch
- Fuse

12345

passing for punk rock these days.

While the lyrics are sometimes nonsensical (e.g., "Compact like trash in the mouse trap

Earth submarine just set down anchor declared myself terror times anger what do I

A RUSH FELT BY A HANDFUL OF WORLD-CLASS
DRIVERS AND THE OCCASION



ASS

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U
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PlayStation



ENOS MES



CULTURE SHOCK

THE TROUBLE WITH GIRLS

CD-ROM Men's Magazine Goes Girl Crazy! Kills 12!

Don't tell me this is the wave of the future. With all the potential to do something truly revolutionary in this format, is all we hope for something like this: breezy, lightweight and ultimately empty???

I don't have a problem with the idea behind making a men's CD-ROM magazine so much as I do with the execution. On one hand, we have titillating shots of girls in bikinis and then on the next we have poetry slams. This really wouldn't be bad if there was at least a hint of genuine humor hidden somewhere in the damn thing. In its place we have forced and somewhat condescending "humorous" intros narrated by several women, even though the contents page already makes them redundant.

First off, I'd like to clue in the publishers of this mag to a couple of things about men:

1) Guys may like fashion, but most of them really have no desire to see a bunch of male models walking back and forth modeling threads ...

2) No matter what anyone says, guys like *Baywatch* for one reason... the women. We don't care at all about David Hasselhoff and his career. Just give us loads of Pamela Anderson pictures and we're happy.

Every magazine has departments and this one is no exception. In *TGA*, a few work and others don't. The Wheels section is handled nicely with stats users can scroll through while a video of that vehicle in action plays alongside. However, *Extreme Sports* acts as a vacation ad, the *Poetry Slam* section (complete with video portion and text stories) is out of place and the *Street Talk* and *Protocol* section

calls to mind the kind of pathetic sanitized dirty talk all too typical of programming on FOX-TV. "Gosh, what do ya suppose her favorite part of the male body is? Guh-huh!"

The best conceptualized and executed department is their music column, *Decibels*. They feature info on 10 recent CD releases. You can access each and sample 15-second samples of all the cuts of that album. Pretty nifty!

The best feature in the whole lot ended up being about *Troma* films. After looking through loads of dull little items, seven *Troma* trailers and a collection of 50 movie posters shocks, you're back awake again. This is the fun that the rest of the magazine sorely needs.

Other features include a very bad video quality interview with comic artist Erik Larsen, a bikini challenge (Really? Challenge? In what way?), *California Dreaming* (more bikinis and a very shaky video drive up the Pacific Coast Highway) and a look at mass-media philosopher

Marshall McLuhan that attempts to explain his ideas with sound bites. I didn't know if he'd been horrified or fascinated. Finally, there's the *Baywatch* cover feature that acts as the magazine's attempt to be "hard-hitting" by having one of the intro-women half-heartedly complain about it.

What it comes down to is that this mag has a lot of *Trouble*, which some fine-tuning and real focus can fix, but *Attitude* isn't a part of *TGA* because this is about the sappiest thing I've ever seen.

—Frank Kurtz



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■ \$9.95

12345



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CULTURE SHOCK

ALL WE NEED IS HATE

It just have to say right off that *Hate* is one of the best comics currently being produced in America today. There. *Whew!*

The main focus of the title is the ongoing mundane to horrifying adventures of Gen Xer Buddy Bradley. Creator Peter Bagge began chronicling the adventures of this scruffy non-hero and his dysfunctional family unit in a book titled *Neat Stuff*—which later evolved into *Hate*. Much of the title's early black-and-white run involved Buddy away from his former New Jersey suburban home, all grown up and living in the midst of the Seattle "scene." But when the decision came down to make *Hate* a full-color book, Bagge decided to send Buddy back to the East Coast to return to the digs of his family.

The current story line involves Buddy's decision to go into business with an old childhood friend, opening up a junk culture store catering to fanatics of all types. Things aren't quite going smoothly as Buddy discovers that his partner has more than his share of personal problems and a virulent resistance to responsibility.

The always wildly unique, humorous art by Bagge and collaborator Jim Blanchard deftly manages to evoke both laughs and horror in the same stroke. Bagge's characters ring true to such a degree that you may find yourself meeting them face to face on any normal day. It's a must-read; you must read it!

—Frank Kurtz

Hate #19

- Created by Peter Bagge and Jim Blanchard
- Published by Fantagraphics
- Bimonthly
- \$2.95



SEE YOU IN HELL YOU MY FRIEND

B If you haven't heard about this crazy computer-gaming phenomenon call *Doom* yet, you really need to get out more ... or should I say stay in more?!

The *Doom* series of games satisfies that craving we all have when we find ourselves sitting down in front of a computer, saying, "I would like something evil, pure evil." These games place the player in the shoes and perspective of a Marine, the sole hope against a vast force of demons bent on invading Earth. To survive this onrushing horde, the players must use his wits as well as a cache of weapons and ammunition that would make even The A-Team proud. Soon enough, you'll be wading right in, knee deep in gore. When you shoot something, don't expect it to disappear—demon blood and guts go flying, and a severely altered carcass falls limply to the ground. Like a passage from a Gigeresque *Hansel & Gretel*, a good way to tell where you've been is by the dead meat strewn across the floor.

Oddly enough, *Ultimate Doom* is the latest in the *Doom* series, though the sequel to the original shoot-'em-up classic has been on store shelves for some time. The twisted minds at id Software have packaged the complete original three *Doom* episodes along with *Thy Flesh Consumed*, a set of grueling new levels aimed at making even the experienced player fear for their sanity.

Simply said, these new levels are *much harder*. Not only will they test your agility at jumping and running over narrow passages, but also how well you can fire while doing so. Forget that handy double-barreled shotgun from *Doom II*, but don't forget to ask friends for the old cheat codes. It's hell.

—Sadie Hummer

- SOURCE: id Software/ GT Interactive
- SYSTEM: PC & like
- THEME: Action
- SPACE: 20.3 MB
- PLAYERS: 1-8



TECH SPECS

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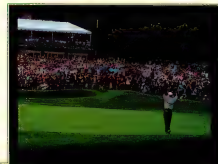


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you're playing on the PGA TOUR.*



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Thanks to multiple camera angles and fast redraw rate, the only thing smoother than your stroke is the view of your shot.



CULTURE SHOCK

MY SO-CALLED STRIFE

Singleton Holds Weighty Themes In Heavy Hands



atching this film left this reviewer wondering if John Singleton had ever been to college—and if he had, did it really suck this bad? If I

hadn't already attended college so many moons back, this film may have made me think twice about it.

Okay, it's not really about college life, but that's what the scenario revolves around. It's more about the lack of communication and understanding people have for each other regardless of color or sex. The characters just seem to keep going along doing their own thing regardless of what damage it does to others.

Higher Learning does have its bright points. Singleton gets some excellent performances out of Ice Cube, Omar Epps, Michael Rapaport and Kristy Swanson as students at Columbus University. In fact, their performances are good enough to make

you worry about their lives, as they prove they're all concurrently intelligent and ignorant at the same time. You can chalk some of it up to youthful ignorant bliss, but at other times, it's obvious that Singleton is just trying to

heavy handedly get his point across. Unfortunately, the film takes more than two very long hours for him to get said point across and does so sometimes getting in the way of logic.

Higher Learning
■ Columbia Pictures
2 1/2

Perhaps most remarkable about

Higher Learning is how Singleton managed to create a sympathetic interpretation of a white supremacist skinhead in the character of Michael Rapaport. Through him, we see how ignorance can cause even the most meek and ordinary person to take up with a violent cause—which makes up the bravest part of the film. Really, the film's messages are good and worthy enough, but the medium is lacking.

—Frank Kurtz

CHICAGO BAND MAKES GOOD

Those truly hunkering for a blast of ear ecstasy should check out this disc by a Chicago-area foursome. Don't let the two-guy, two-girl lineup fool you—this talented foursome could have Versus Salt for breakfast and have room left over for Betty as well.

Pickle is full of irresistible melodies, but the Smoothies don't go for the obvious, polished approach—they submerge their addictive hooks in buzzsaw guitars and thunderous yet supple rhythms. *Butter Crisp* best exemplifies the Smoothies' sonic assault: The band sets up a groove, relentlessly driven by Chad Lind's crack drumming, that the Rolling Stones (past or present) would envy, then revs the song up to mosh-inducing double time with effortless power. I'd challenge anyone to find three more addictive rock tunes than *Butter Crisp* and the two songs that precede it, *Little Nine* and *Godhust*. The trio of songs are a controlled riot of precision playing married to indelible riffs and perfectly deadpan vocals. In Jenn Solheim and Sarah Contorer (who play bass



<http://www.activision.com/>

"One back as



MASTER OF PUPPETS

Laurie Anderson Opens Own Motel—But Am It Art?

There are some entertainment CD-ROMs that fall into that gray area between love and hate. *Laurie*

Anderson's Puppet Motel is one of them. On the one hand, this is an extremely appealing CD-ROM chock full of interesting and stimulating visuals and interactive content. On the other hand, its imaginative design is difficult to navigate and a visitor to Laurie Anderson's world begins their journey tinged with frustration.

Puppet Motel was released in conjunction with Anderson's first live multimedia performance in five years, *The Nerve Bible Tour*. This CD-ROM uses a house and its many rooms as the explorative metaphor. Each room contains a visual, mental and auditory experience. Some of these experiences are be savored while others are to be quickly dismissed. Unlike in her live performance, a CD-ROM does not require a viewer's linear attention. This manifests itself in by clicking through the experience before it has been played out. I found several in which I quickly exited, but

not without some degree of difficulty. There is one room in which you can control the light streaming in through a window pane. You grab it with the little hand pointer and push the light over a very small area of the room. When you see a shadowy figure, click on it. Unfortunately, I can't see any reaction from



nonsensical: a man on a telephone, a woman on a telephone and a primitive cartoon where a man hammers on a child's head. Did I miss something?

Publisher Voyager says there is more than an hour in music located by clicking on the radio in the motel room, however, I never managed to get the music to play. As a matter of fact, I found many instances in which the pointer wouldn't initiate clicking wouldn't initiate anything. I double checked my system ... and it exceeded the CD-ROM requirements in all respects. Much to strange.

—Stepan Dahl

clicking. In retrospect, I found this room unsatisfying and my mood was carried through to other rooms.

Upon entering into the room with a lone television, the pointer changes (indicating an action is possible) but there was nothing to do or at least nothing that I could find. You can click on the rabbit ear antennae, but then I could not get the television picture screen to clear up. The visuals on the television screen seemed



and guitar in the band), the Smoothies are blessed with two extremely gifted songwriters, but all four players in the band are exceptionally talented. Solheim's inventive bass playing perfectly complements Lind's minimalist, rock-steady drumming, and lead guitarist John Swami embroiders the band's songs with unshowy skill and a perfect sense of timing.

The Smoothies may have come up through Chicago's thriving all-ages scene, but their playing skills and ability to come up with divine slices of postpunk melodicism put them in the same league as their heroes, especially Nirvana. These still undecided about whether to buy this record should consider this: If your idea of great music is pummeling, well-executed guitar rock in the vein of Nirvana's *Nevermind*, check out the Smoothies.

—Mo Ryan



The Smoothies

- Pickle
- Southern

12345

fire burn a ... and leave a blanket of

CULTURE SHOCK



FLY WITH THE EAGLES—SHOOT THEM DOWN

In many flight or space simulators, players go through so much training just to get started that they might as well consider taking up a new career. Sure, complex control schemes can be rewarding after you learn them (like the gratifying sense of satisfaction you feel after you master your yearly taxes), but sometimes you long for the days of an old one-button joystick.

Terminal Velocity lets you concentrate on combat, pure and simple, not how to fly the Space Shuttle. There are two buttons to know: one for fire and the other for the afterburner thrust.

Players find themselves doing battle in three very different locations, each with a gauntlet of levels to survive, and ending in an overgrown killing machine with a bad attitude. Try strategy. Try guile. If all else fails, look for the cheat codes.

A good shooter game should be like a good action movie—entertaining, quick, simple, completely lacking in puns and with a variety of enemies to metamorphose into “quality kills.”

This game has all that and more. Even better for some, *Terminal Velocity* runs ultra-fast and ultra-smooth on a Pentium. Enjoy.

—Sadie Huxemer

TECH SPECS

- SOURCE: 3-D Realms/Apogee
- SYSTEM: PC & like
- THEME: Action/arcade
- HD SPACE: Disk 24 MB;
CD 40 MB
- PLAYERS: 1

\$23.45

ash on the



robain <http://>

HABEAS CORPSES

Just Cause found guilty of mediocrity

Just Cause acts as one of those bread-and-butter films studios release every spring to fill that void between the holiday season Oscar-hopefuls and the summer blockbusters. The big names that draw in the audiences furnish passable performances with dialogue from inferior scripts. Any picture lucky enough to make it big between New Year's Day and Memorial Day is labeled a "sleeper hit." Just Cause neither received nor deserves such a distinction, and it's no better on video.

Sean Connery plays Paul Armstrong, a Harvard law professor who gave up trial law 25 years before Evangelyne Ferguson (Ruby Dee) confronts him with the plight of her grandson, Robert "Bobby" Earl (Blair Underwood). Earl has spent eight years on death row for the murder and rape of 11-year-old Joanie Shriver. He claims he was railroaded—a victim of prejudice and jealousy. The main basis for his conviction was a confession that Earl insists was the result of 22 hours of torture at the hands of Ochopee, Florida sheriff Tanny Brown (Laurence Fishburne).

Earl's story plays on Armstrong's overdeveloped sense of justice and ices the cake with some professional flattery. Yet this isn't enough to get Armstrong involved. It's only when his wife Laurie (Kate Capshaw) tells him he should try his hand at "the real world" that he commits himself to reopening Earl's case.

It's obvious from the onset of the film that both Laurie and Earl have their own reasons for getting Armstrong involved, but the choice still seems an unlikely one. His 25 years out of circulation show when he heads to Ochopee to investigate the case personally, not demonstrating any real signs of weakness, but appearing gullible and impotent nonetheless. In fact, Armstrong makes a

better detective than he does a lawyer. He proves to himself that Brown probably did coerce the confession from Earl, leading him to pursue relentlessly Earl's version of the truth. His job is practically done for him when one of Earl's fellow inmates, Blair Sullivan (Ed Harris), all but admits to doing the deed when he gives hints leading to the location of the missing murder weapon.

Just Cause suffers from predictability. The only thing we can't quite conceive is why Armstrong initially allows himself to be coerced into taking the case. He appears adamantly against it, yet the very analytical mind

that leads him to the answers in the film is naive whenever the story needs it to be.

The role of a conservative professor ill befits Connery, because we're more accustomed to his usual reserved arrogance. His character bears the brunt of some harsh abuse, and Connery just doesn't come off as the type of man powerless to defend himself from it. Fishburne, on the other hand, is staying within the parameters of the nasty image he honed as Ike, Tina Turner's wife-beating husband in *What's Love Got to Do with It?*

Just Cause is the victim of an easily exhausted supply of possible plot twists, in large part probably due to the small number of players. It's a clear case of what actors do with their spare time—make standard movies while hits like Connery's *First Knight* wait in the wings. There's grisly death circa *Silence of the Lambs* at every turn, but someone should really just put Just Cause out of our misery.

—John Barr

Just Cause

Widescreen Video

1 1/2 Days

DARK KNIGHT EATS MUCK

Call it memory-lapse, call it what you will. We all sometimes forget that the world of DC's superheroes is the same place where the Swamp Thing dwells. Here's your reminder.

Along with artists Kelley Jones and John Beatty, writer

Batman #522

- Story by Doug Moench
- Art by Kelley Jones and John Beatty
- Published by DC Comics
- Monthly
- \$1.95

3 1/2



Doug Moench has created a story both poetic, horrifying and reminiscent of some of the greatest past Dark Knight stories.

This time around, the Bat-Guy leaves comfortable Gotham City

for the swamps of the Florida Everglades on a manhunt after the freakish Killer Croc.

Batman wants to bring Croc back, and there's just one thing in his way... Swamp Thing.

Since writer Alan Moore took this muck-man into uncharted comics territories years ago, the challenge to all writers afterward has been to keep up or do better. This issue does a fine job doing just that, reminding readers why these characters have stayed so vital after all these years.

—Frank Kurtz

CULTURE SHOCK

MORE Foo THAN ANY ONE MAN CAN HANDLE

Nirvana fans hungering to hear shades of that group on this new disc by Foo Fighters (the group formed by ex-Nirvana drummer Dave Grohl) most likely won't be disappointed. The same propulsive, fuzzy guitar attack that propelled them to near-legendary status is evident all over this album, and the songs are full of the kind of angst that's familiar to fans of Grohl's previous band.

Although the subject matter and grunge-pop sound of Foo Fighter's disc may be no great surprise, the vocals, all of which are sung by Grohl, are a pleasant revelation—he obviously has a nice set of pipes.

If there's one thing the disc suffers from, it's an overall sameness. That's where Foo Fighters suffer in comparison to Nirvana—one of Kurt Cobain's greatest gifts as a songwriter was his ability to shift effortlessly from subtle dirges like *Something In the Way* to all-out rockers full of rage and pain, i.e., *Smells Like Teen Spirit*. The Foo Fighters disc contains nothing

Foo Fighters



quite that anticlimactic, but there aren't many duds either. Grohl's heavily compressed vocals and the duality of hard-and-heavy rockers alternating with slower numbers does become a bit repetitive, but all things considered, the artist formerly known as the drummer for Nirvana has carved out a respectable new place for himself in the rock community.



—Mo Ryan

APOLLO XIII GOES AWRY IN DETAIL

Many Generation Xers never had the opportunity to experience the space race of the '60s and '70s. For Boomers this was an exciting time, but we as nation forgot just how risky space flight is until we were jolted by the Challenger disaster. The risk astronauts take each and every space flight is enormous and in the case of Apollo XIII, the near disaster was as gut wrenching as any piece of fiction concocted by disaster movie guru Irv Allen.

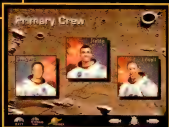
Yes, a movie has been made dramatizing those anxious moments in the spring of 1970 and a good movie it is, but for those of you who are philopoles there is a CD-ROM that covers the Apollo XIII accident in an easy-to-use and informative format. *Apollo XIII: A Week To Remember* is published by Odyssey Interactive of St. Louis, MO, and is pulled through all the pictures, audio, newspaper and film accounts to allow browsers access to the whole story as it occurred in sequence or skip about.



There are five areas of exploration, each with subareas, while a command task bar is present on every screen so you can use the options from within the program. Once a particular area of exploration is loaded you'll see a lunar module icon that always takes you back to the main screen. Also present are two or three rocket icons, two of which serve as page left or right markers while a blaster rocket indicates automatic play.

Under the topic Odyssey & Aquarius you'll be able to meet all three astronauts (Swigert, Haise and Lovell) as well as the backup crew. In a different subarea, users visit and make nice with mission control. The third subarea is all about the space craft including why the primary crew chose the code names of Odyssey and Aquarius. There are well-made illustrations, animations and video clips that explore the ship in detail.

The strength of *Apollo XIII* lies in all the information O.I. has gathered on the accident and the near frantic attempts to save the crew.



There are actual sound bites between the crew and ground control, as well as digitized video and animations explaining the details of the accident and rescue attempts.

Apollo XIII: A Week To Remember is an excellent reference work, finer still in that it manages to be entertaining to boot.

—Stepan Dahl

ahoo.com "Lemonade at the st

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CULTURE SHOCK



STAR TREK MEANS LOVE

For many Trekkers, the fearless Next Generation crew of the Starship Enterprise will be sorely missed. But all good things must come to an end, right? Not if there's money to be made from it.

Seven of the major members

each resembles an episode in its own right, but are interconnected into a larger plot that endangers, possibly the entire universe. Players must send members of the crew to different locations to look for clues, ultimately trying to piece them all together. For some fans, a dead ensign might be a good ensign, but you'll have to be careful as your own poor judgment may risk you the loss of your crew.

All of *Final Unity's* backgrounds are wonderfully hand rendered in SVGA graphics (one of the sharpest formats available on PC to date) by Spectrum Holobyte's own

TECH SPECS

- **SOURCE:** Spectrum Holobyte
- **SYSTEM:** PC & like
- **THEME:** Adventure
- **HD SPACE:** 13.7 MB
- **PLAYERS:** 1

3

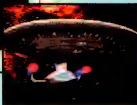
of the cast provide the voice-over work for their characters in *Final Unity*. This, along with authentic music and sound effects, helps the game create a near-exact feel of a TV episode.

The game's set-up includes a number of away team missions;

team of artists giving every planet its own unique appearance.

Overall, it's pretty, sounds good, plays well—a good show.

—Sadie Hummer



THEY SHOOT MEN FOR SNORING TOO LOUD

Jasmine Multimedia of Van Nuys, CA, has been doing interesting multimedia titles since their inception in 1982 and has since compiled one of the world's largest collections of video, music and photographs to use in their titles. This is readily apparent on *The Wild West* two CD-ROM set, one of the more comprehensive titles yet produced about the American West.

Adapting the television miniseries, *The Wild West* features

the celebrity voices from some 30 actors and actresses, including Joe Don Baker as Jesse James, Helen Hunt as Abbie Bright, Tim Curry as Oscar Wilde, Edward James Olmos as Miguel Otero, Corbin Bernsen as J. G. Rourke and narration by Jack Lemmon.

On the first disc, users will find full-length presentations on *Searchers*, which deals in detail with the early explorers of the West; and *Dreamers & Wayfarers*, where you'll learn about all the issues and people involved with the settling of the West. Also present are the full-length sections *Indians*, the struggle for survival against the white settler onslaught and *Soldiers*, covering the men who established military control of the frontier. On disc two, *Wild West* continues onto the topics and lives of the *Cowboys*, *Gunfighters*, *Townpeople* and *Chroniclers*. In all, there are about 2,000 photographs and videos incorporated into the set, making repeated viewings a must as well as a pleasure.

Besides presenting just scads of information, Jasmine also allows users easy access to it. From the index you can specifically choose a person, place or thing and the search engine will quickly cue up the relevant episode. Supplementary materials such as maps, timelines and the actual episode script are also easily found. *The Wild West* is really quite thorough; once you start exploring it, you'll find yourself entirely hooked.

—Stepan Dahl



The Wild West

- Jasmine Multimedia
- Windows
- \$49.95

12345

...fair — just like a keg of pee — N.Y.C.

BLACKFIRE BACKFIRE

Numerous Nuisances Send This Birdy Down In A Ball Of Flames

With the launch of the Sega Saturn a few months back, the next concentration of titles will probably consist of today's rage: heavy-duty polygon games. One of the first—apart from *Panzer*

Dragon and Bug!—is *Blackfire*, a chopper simulation. Though this concept should be fairly easy to follow through on, the game falls flat on several points.

Players begin with three options: Mission, Training, and Options. There are four types of control settings in Options, conveniently listed A, B, C and D. Inconveniently, the actual definitions as to what these controls modify are left out. A pitiable problem really, aside from the fact that they quickly continue to add up.

Players who may want to acquaint themselves with the game play before jumping into the thick of battle are in for a surprise. Once Training Mode is entered—WHAM!—a mini-mission has begun and players must learn fast, without

the benefit of a mission briefing or any explanation of how to use the chopper's weapon or lock-on capabilities. Don't expect congratulations upon completing this sequence, the screen simply fades out into the Title Screen.

In the beginning of the actual missions, players are treated to an impressively rendered scene displaying target locations and local terrain obstacles.

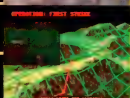
Once in the cockpit, players find an arsenal comprised of four types of missile weapons and a standard machine gun. Of course, also present is an altimeter, damage display, fuel gauge, speedometer and two types of radar, one form displaying local terrain, while the other shows enemy units and fire. Problems often

occur while trying to use the radar since it doesn't pinpoint the chopper's proximity to the nearest target and borders aren't marked, both causing players to quickly and completely lose their sense of direction.

Even worse is when players actually get into the thick of things and begin battling enemy units. Missing are the crosshair displays we've all come to regard as standard, so targeting is anything but easy. Players try to lock-on manually to a target, but this can get really tedious—especially when there are formations of hucys at 12 o'clock, and between three to five ground-to-air missiles at almost every turn.

The best point of *Blackfire* is that it's pretty. The polygon landscape scrolls pretty smoothly, and builds out far enough so that players can plan ahead for where to go. Overall, *Blackfire* could've been something sweet, but the inconveniences just add up too much. Nifty looks, but that's about it.

—Mike Vallas



TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Sega
- SYSTEM: Sega Saturn
- THEME: Action/Arcade
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

2

SEAMS
GOOD
ENOUGH
TO ME

I know, but that's be

WALKING THE VIRTUAL PLANK

ALG's Space Pirates Boards the 3DO

Electronic gaming has this subgenre called "interactive cinema," in which development groups buy filmmaking equipment and try to create a movie-like game with actors, sets, sfx and branching story lines.

The problem most of these projects face exists in the intrinsic differences between the two media. Movies are linear, totally passive experiences, requiring no user thought or involvement of any kind. Interactivity, on the other hand, is the lifeblood of electronic games; the player must be able to buy into the illusion that they have an impact on the story line's resolution.

Given this, *Space Pirates* is the gaming equivalent of a direct-to-video sci-fi junker that even Charlie Band would release under a phony name. Publisher/developer American Laser Games burst upon the gaming scene years ago with *Mad Dog McCree*, a Western shooter in which the player is guided along a linear plot line by on-screen sidekicks. *Mad Dog* initiated the trend toward full-motion video

(FMV), light gun shooters in which gamers fire at on-screen foes in a kill-or-be-killed format.

Unfortunately, ALG has not evolved beyond this one-trick

reportedly sold fewer than 50 units, worldwide.

In *Space Pirates*, players blast away at actors posing as deep space privateers instead of actors posing as old West bad guys. The FMV is horrible; the video is far



TECH SPECS

■ PUBLISHER: American Laser Games ■ SYSTEM: 3DO ■ THEME: FMV Shooter ■ MEGABITS: N/A ■ PLAYERS: 1-2 ■ LEVELS: N/A

pony technology. ALG's most experimental project was a *Gallagher* coin-op, in which players blasted away with light guns at large, stupid props. It



more washed out than Tom Zito's latest Sega 32X stuff, and the acting demonstrates ALG's usual C-level production values. All in all, you're probably better off renting a bad sci-fi video.

—Z. Burroughs

THE GAME TO MOVIE SCALE

A scale has been provided that rates a game's representativeness between real movies and their interactive cousins. In terms of acquisition, production values and game playability: ■ *Wing Commander II* (Orion) is a major-M picture, somewhere between *Star Wars* and *Temple of Doom*. ■ *Conquest* (Atari) is a *Star Wars* (Atari) picture. ■ *Conquest* (Atari) is a *Star Wars* (Atari) picture. ■ *Conquest* (Atari) is a *Star Wars* (Atari) picture.

Good news, folks. Chicago is still considered a hot-bed of talented bands, due mainly to the success of the Pumpkins and other groundbreakers. The bad news is there's only one Billy Corrigan. But, hey kids, if you like the sound the man popularized, then you'll probably like the new CD from Seam.

While Seam does have an original and consistent sound the term "Pumpkins-Lite" keeps coming to mind. Possibly due to the slightly anemic, half whisper singing style that permeates the CD.

There's a lot of "boy and girl, girl leaves boy now what the hell is the boy gonna do now" themes. If you've recently suffered a hardcore breakup, *Are You Driving Me Crazy?* would be a good CD to get drunk to. Otherwise, it's a bit much at times.

Most of the tracks are built around a clean, jangly guitar sound tempered with doses of distortion for taste. (I think the kids call it grunge.) *Are You Driving Me Crazy?* is a mid-tempo, mild energy CD with the exception of a couple standouts.

Broken Bones has a cool groove that mixes well with the quasi-angst ridden lyrics. Couple that with fluctuating

SEAM

■ Seam
■ Touch and Go Records

3



musical dynamics and you have one of the standout songs of the CD.

My first thoughts listening to *Pretty Thievery* were, "Holy shit! They can play fast!" The vocalist manages to really cut loose yet project energy at the same time. More of this please and ... oh damn, it's

another relationship song.

Don't misunderstand, it's not a bad CD. There's just some mysterious quality about it that never quite gelled for me.

—Dean Hager

CULTURE SHOCK

RIGHTEOUS ROUNDBALL

Smokin' Sports Simulation Shoots and Scores

Hot sports sims have been rare on the next-gen console systems, but neo-3DO developer I.A.M. Field Productions has definitely hit a three pointer at the buzzer with *Slam 'N Jam '95*, the best one-on-five roundball game available on any console system.

Basketball games have had a lot of problems in the simulation arena. For the most part, EA Sports held the crown on NBA Live '95 on 16-bit systems, an unconventional but extremely slick translation of roundball action. And, to be perfectly frank, there will still be many players who prefer EA's offer-

ing because of its official NBA sanction. But even without the logos and NBA star appeal, most fans should be able to locate their favorite players without too much trouble.

The game's only weakness is its reliance on "hot spots" positions on the court from which players rarely if ever miss a jumper. At first, in arcade play, most gamers will be taken aback by the CPU, but once the learning curve is diminished, gamers will be performing slam-dunk jumps, alley oops and all those other "flat" moves with ease.

The game uses an interesting POV, with players tracked up and down the

court through the use of a slightly elevated camera. The action and presentation seem largely inspired by Konami's coin-op classic *Run and Gun*, and the fact is that if *Slam 'N Jam* were plunked down in most arcades it would inhale quarters. The large player characters may not have any fireball samurai dunks, a la *NBA Jam*, but the pure basketball action, this game is a major addition to the 3DO sports catalog.

—Bill Kunkel



TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Crystal Dynamics
- SYSTEM: 3DO
- THEME: Sports (Basketball)
- MEGABITS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1-2
- LEVELS: N/A

¡QUE SUERTE! MUCHO GUSTO

If Yo La Tengo's *Electro-pura* was a beer, it'd be a big ol' thick dark ale (from a Hoboken, NJ, microbrewery). Pop off the cap and suck down the dark goodness of its hypnotic, bitter sounds.

Yo La Tengo spins a beautiful web of ambient darkness through careful use of feedback, backward tracks and vocal harmony. Quite often these elements weave together easily, not too overpoweringly and never falling out of the pocket.

I'm a sucker for the use of feedback as an integral part of a band's sound—not the screech of an '80s metal band, but the sweet long sustain a la Jimi H. From the opening track, you'll find their sound more emotionally driven, more firmly rooted in modern psychedelia than generic "balls to

the wall" energy. Their style is often simple, yet fully able to lull you into a full-fledged William S. Burroughs foot-gazing trance.

The monotonous dirge of *Flying Lesson* gives way to a mellower acoustic, while *The Hour Grows Late* shows their experimental side, not only in their sound but in their ability to run the gamut of musical energy—less of a roller coaster than a Tilt-O-Whirl of musical fluctuations.

False Ending is a hypnotic, lyrical

YO LA TENGO

- *Electro-pura*
- Matador

4



noise short, aptly placed on the album to act as a sort of mental intermission to prepare you for heavier tracks. *My Heart's*

Reflection is just a man, his guitar and some pent-up emotion that quite frequently

bursts through the guitar in awkward bursts. Only *Attack on Love* felt lost on the CD, a two-minute tantrum on an otherwise well-thought-out album.

In today's increasingly homogenous-sounding "alternative" music scene, Yo La Tengo is cutting a path with some old weapons, mainly talent and imagination.

—Dean Hager

PREPARE TO BE ROMANCED!

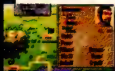
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CULTURE SHOCK



OOOOOH...TRIPPPPY!!!

It's doubtless that the population of any other decade pursued audio-visual interactive experience as vehemently as the people of the 1960s—and with the advent of CD-ROM technology, it seemed simply a matter of time before a chronicle of the times was created to convey the period. *Haight-Ashbury In The Sixties* is such a creature.

Haight-Ashbury In The Sixties follows the rise and the fall of Haight-Ashbury (the San Francisco area that made up the hub of the hippie movement) through audio clips, video clips and art, as well as a walk through the site of *The San Francisco Oracle*, "the world's first underground psychedelic newspaper" and bible of the region.

Entering the program, users are given the choice of three areas to wade into: Tune In, Turn On or Drop Out.

Tune In is essentially *Haight-Ashbury In The Sixties'* reference section. It houses

text writings by such '60s counterculture icons as William S. Burroughs and Allen Ginsburg; video interviews with Ken Kesey, Timothy Leary and a very young Grateful Dead (Jerry? Is that you? Is that really you?) and selections of text and artwork from *The San Francisco Oracle*.

Turn On is an audio/visual presentation of the rise and fall of Haight-Ashbury, going through the full history of the area and *The San Francisco Oracle* in no small detail.

Drop Out is a game that places one or more players in Haight in the early '60s, where they struggle to attain "enlightenment." To achieve this lofty goal, players must gather points from several attribute categories: food and shelter, hipness, spirituality and love. By receiving random cards (accompanied by audio and video clips, as well as a simulated acid trip) players learn if they've lost points from such things as scoring some bad acid (We've received

word that there's some bad brown acid circulating around out there. Please be advised) or gained by being one of the original Deadheads. Gaining points leads the player's forward through a four-tier system toward that ever-far-off goal of enlightenment. (If you were wondering, I never achieved enlightenment, seriously hounding me out and leading me to believe it may be easier to attain in the real world than in this CD-ROM.)

Thankfully, another feature *Haight-Ashbury In The Sixties* carries is a sense of humor. When leaving users waiting, the program provides messages that read "Loading image file from disc. Patience is a virtue," or "Initializing a new game. Be cool, man." Little touches like these help make the CD-ROM enjoyable.

Anyone with even the slightest interest in the 1960s music, literature, drug or political movements should enjoy *Haight-Ashbury In The Sixties*. Unfortunately, the \$50 price tag probably puts it out of the reach of many who may be largely ignorant of the time period and ... curious. It's a shame really, because that lends the CD-ROM more toward preaching to the converted than educating new comers.

—Joe Fickler

Haight-Ashbury In the Sixties

By William S. Burroughs
Allen Ginsburg
Ken Kesey
Timothy Leary
Grateful Dead

3v



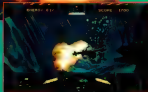
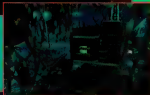
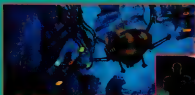
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WETLANDS

CULTURE SHOCK



THIRD TIME'S THE CHARM

Wing Commander III Makes its 3DO Premiere

The first thing veteran 3DO owners will notice upon booting up this third installment in Chris Roberts' epic *Wing Commander* chronicles is the quality of the full-motion video (FMV). While other developers scramble and sweat to produce film-quality video playback with minimal payoff, Origin's work here is an absolute revelation. All hints of blurring or grainy texturing are gone, leaving behind a vibrant, MPEG-quality image that smoothly engages the eye.

For newcomers, there's no need to be familiar with the first two WC titles in order to get in on the fun, as this entry stands very well on its own. For the first time in the series, the on-screen characters are portrayed by real, not computer-generated, actors. The star-studded cast includes the legendary Malcolm McDowell in a blond buzzcut; John Rhys-Davies (*Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *Sliders*); Mark Hamill (turning in his best work since *Corvette Summer*); Tom Wilson (*Back to the Future*) and porn

star Ginger Lynn Allen.

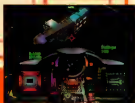
The game content itself integrates the standard elements of quality interactive cinema with game mechanics not much different from those in the original WC entry.

The dogfights are superbly handled, but the lack of a computer keyboard occasionally leads to problems in terms of player interaction. Whereas the computer version of the game can assign a wide variety of commands to a single button each, the far more limited input devices available to a 3DO gamer can make some of the command entries difficult to pull off in the heat of battle.

That said, *Wing Commander III*:

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Origin
- SYSTEM: 3DO
- THEME: SF Action-Adventure
- MEGABITS: N/A
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A



Heart of the Tiger, is a fantastic addition to the 3DO library, with its lion-headed, animatronic Kilrathi aliens, big-budget sex and an ambitious blend of arcade action and cinematic context. Chris has said that the next installment will have to be a movie and a game, "just to justify the budget." Certainly, topping this effort may well require him to master some next-generation sorcery. —Bill Kunkel

GHOST RIDER IS NOT DAVID HASSLEHOFF

Issue #16 finds *Ghost Rider* in something of a difficult place. His new gig as Federal Marshall creates a situation where his old enemies in the police force still hate him (but now have to work with him), while his old friends hate him since he's now effectively "The Man." Beyond even that, events force him to renge on a deal, making his word on the street utterly worthless... and people spit on him in public. In a nutshell, it's not a good day to be GR.

And it's not a good day to jump on the title either. One of the problems of this serial format is



Ghost Rider 2099 #16

- Marvel Comics
- Story by Eric Kimbrell
- Art by Andy Boudry
- Monthly
- \$2.95

123 1/2 45

to enjoy *Ghost Rider* 2099 #16, you need to know: A) *Ghost Rider* was once a normal guy (well, a street-hood cyberpunk to be exact) whose consciousness was transferred into a warbot at the point of his death. B) The new president of the United States managed a deal with

his "creators" to brainwashing him into becoming Federal Marshall in the New Order. C) Other assorted bits of backstory from the last 15 issues.

Don't get me wrong. It's an excellent title—combining literary and film influences to create something far beyond most comics—but a graphic novel collection would help to make it accessible to a much wider audience. —Joe Fielder

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Azotar



Hawk



Freon



Arashi



3DO

The Semag-Resai, a vicious alien race from the Nacirema system, have conquered and invaded the earth. Scattered bands of rebels are Earth's last hope of breaking Semag rule. As one of the volunteers, your mission is to free the humans stored in stasis at each base and destroy the sentient "boss" robot. You are equipped with a bio-enhancer which increases your normal abilities, an energy shield, and your chosen weapon.

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AMERICAN
LASER GAMES

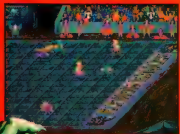
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CULTURE SHOCK



THE 3DO GOES TO HELL

And Likes It So Much, It Stays There

Subtitled "A Cyberpunk Thriller," Tetragon's 3DO version of *Hell* is a preposterously awful, icon-infested adventure that is a virtual handbook of everything that's wrong with this genre. From the outrageous introduction, starring the worst-looking computer-generated human models ever rendered in silicon, to the confusing play system, this game is so awful it almost defies description.

The plot, set a hundred years in the future, uses Washington, D.C., as a portal to the infernal regions. At night, demons prowling the streets, hassling gangs and dragging freelance sinners into the steaming, sulfurous pits. The U.S., meanwhile, is ruled by a political party dubbed the Hand of God, under the autocratic dominion of the Imperator Solene Solux. A new version of the Bible has replaced everything from the Baltimore Catechism to the Constitution, and all computer technology has been eradicated also. Oh yes, free speech, literature, art and just about every basic human right have also been abolished.

Not hellish enough for you? Then imagine that you have to navigate this world via an icon-intensive interface so logistically warped that the game experience is not unlike driving a nail through a two by four with a screwdriver. Then there's the ever-present faux-cyberpeak and Dennis Hopper. Between his work here and his portrayal of King Koopa in the *Super Mario Brothers* movie, Hopper is not exactly endearing himself to Fusion fans. —Z. Burroughs

AN OPEN LETTER TO JOEL SCHUMACHER

Hey, Joel, next time you put together a soundtrack, at least pretend it's connected to the film and drop in a few dialogue samples, too. As it stands, this soundtrack hasn't even the slightest vestigial link to the movie.

Sure, there's at least a chunk of good music here, but ultimately this CD doesn't accomplish what a movie soundtrack is supposed to do: Evoke the feeling that you got seeing the film in the first place.

How do you think something like this is created? Does Joel Schumacher call up all of his musical buddies and say, "Hey, I'm making this *Batman* movie. Why don't you record a song and maybe I'll stick it in the movie somewhere? By the way, I can only fit in about a minute and a half of music, so make it good! Maybe I can get your video on MTV." How else, I ask you, could a soundtrack be put together with musicians as disparate as Brandy and PJ Harvey? This album doesn't work under the pretense of "something for everyone," but instead "something on this CD will annoy the shit out of you." In my case, Seal's overblown *Kiss From A Rose* and Brandy's outasweet *Where Are You Now?* easily took up the latter.

Alright, there are several tracks worthy of skipping over, but there are worthy songs as well. I liked U2's *Hold Me*, Thrill Me, Kiss Me, Kill Me for the simple fact that it

proves a band doesn't need a soul in order to make a good pop song. Massive Attack With Tracey Thorn's *The Hunter Gets*



Batman Forever Soundtrack
■ Atlantic Records

2345

Captured by the Game is a nice spooky track, while Nick Cave's *There Is a Light* is a gritty tune that's a lot like Warren Zevon circa *Werewolves Of London*. Now why the hell wasn't this song featured in the movie? The same question can be asked about Method Man's *The Riddler*, which actually has the sound and feel of soundtrack music. The Flaming Lips' *Bad Days* is likeable even though it barely even hints at the flick. Admittedly, most songs herein are enjoyable even in spite of what a strange animal this album is. —Frank Kurtz

TECH SPECS

■ PUBLISHER: Tetragon ■ SYSTEM: 3DO ■ THEME: Adventure
■ MEGABITS: N/A ■ PLAYERS: 1 ■ LEVELS: N/A

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PUNK'S FAVORITE DINOSAURS BID ADIEU

When The Ramones appeared at The MTV Movie Awards and performed a medley combining their classic early tunes with modern titles (by artists like Warren G, Elton John and Madonna), it soon became apparent they still had it—even if that “it” hadn’t been readily apparent in their last several albums.

Well, it’s evident again here in their 17th and final album, *Adios Amigos!* There’s an interesting mix of the classic Ramones bop-punk tied into a younger punk element here, which together really make the CD a lot of fun. This new element seems to stem from vocals of C. J. Ramone, who sings tracks like *The Crusher* and *Makin’ Monsters For My Friends*. Then, of course, Joey’s there to remind you just how good the classic Ramones sound is with songs like *Life’s A Gas*, a killer cover of Tom Waits’ *I Don’t Want To Grow Up* and the old *Spider-Man* TV show theme song (hidden after track 13).

Adios Amigos! breaks The Ramones out of the clichéd rut of the last few years, proving again to the world what made the band so trend-setting in the first place and making it even sadder to see them go. —Joe Fielder

The Ramones

- *Adios Amigos!*
- Radioactive

123i/245

ALIEN SENSITIVITY

With the massive popularity of Dr. John Gray’s relationship how-to guide, *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, the CD-ROM version really didn’t need much more than the title to be a hit. Unfortunately, it doesn’t.

Billed as an interactive workshop to improve communication in relationships, this CD-ROM amounts to little more than a high-tech form of Cliff’s Notes for a book that’s essentially bathroom lit at most.

From the beginning, users are given several areas to explore, one of which is

there, users are introduced to Michael and Megan, an everycouple who demonstrate both the eerily familiar dysfunctional spots in a relationship as well as a “right way” to solve problems, which might look good in a studio, but just doesn’t happen in the real world.

In a case of Megan’s preppy jitters, she worries that she doesn’t have enough wine for her dinner guests, who are apparently notorious lushes. When she asks her husband to go out and get some more before the party, he doesn’t think they’ll need it, but an argument is easily avoided by Michael giving in with the “Yes Dear” mentality. Only the guys who already have the “Yes Dear” mentality will bother to make it this far into the disc anyway.

Further exploring the workshop, a click on the *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus* icon will take users to the exact book passage that is being demonstrated by Michael and Megan.

Taken directly from the book, the suggestions and pointers made in the workshop are helpful in learning to interpret how members of the opposite sex think.

What the CD-ROM does best, however, is demonstrate that not every work of literature needs to be adapted for the multimedia marketplace.

Other than the original text of the book, the useless interac-

tive aspects lack the cleverness that made the book so popular. Besides, it’s also a lot tougher to drag your computer into the bathroom during commercial breaks.

—Mike Stokes

Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus

- HarperCollins
- Interactive
- Windows
- \$49.95

2



listen to this annoying infomercial, as it is a tremendous waste of time.

Clicking on the personal workshop, users are treated to the only marginally original part of the CD-ROM. A brief questionnaire corresponding to gender is administered to determine potential trouble spots in a relationship. From



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CULTURE SHOCK

SELF-PUBLISHING WAS NEVER ^{SO} TOUGH

Internet Publishing Kit Drops Ball, Falls Down, Loses Big Contract

By now you've probably heard about how easy it is to "get on the information superhighway" and how equally easy it is to have your own site. You've also probably seen dozens of software packages offering Internet access and space for your own site. *Internet Publishing Kit* from Ventana Press is one among the many.

Internet Publishing Kit

- Ventana Press
- Windows
- \$99.95



The kit includes two CD-ROMs and HTML Publishing On the Internet, a fat book that's jammed full of info and tutorials on how to use different World Wide Web page creation software and techniques for programming. What's supposed to be so nice about this package is that users are able to read the 500-page book, program your own WWW page(s) with the great software included, and then through a special (mind you, not free) offer, put your pages on the Internet for literally millions of people to access.

The problems begin when the user tries to find the programming software among the two CD-ROMs, and continue when they try to learn how to effectively program in HTML (HyperText Markup Language) and/or SGML (Standard Generalized Markup Language). The difference between HTML and SGML is that, at this point, SGML seems to have a better look if you have a compliant web browser. Does this seem too technical? My point exactly.

The packaging boasts

that the kit comes with the full version of HotMetal Pro and Netscape 1.1, which are a couple of excellent programs. A sheet (which appeared to be added in at the last minute) explains how to install HotMetal Pro, Mapedit and Drag and Zip and where they're located on the CD. The sheet's final paragraph reveals that there are other programs on the CD-ROM and to access them you simply have to unzip them—though what they are and where they are is a complete mystery. Also you must already have the PKZIP compression utility to unzip the files off the disc and know what ZIP is. Then the 15 or so other programs included

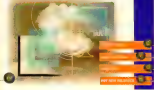
on the two CD-ROMs have to be accessed on your own.

After you've found all the software and other utilities and finish making your web page, you can access the Ventana Press web site to submit a form so you too can be on the info superhighway. At press time, though, the on-line form was not available because they couldn't use "secure transactions" (a small problem with the Net) and I'm still waiting for a reply from the people. I also

didn't notice anywhere in the documentation any reference to how much said space will cost.

"Clunky" and "non-user friendly" are words that immediately come to mind. If you're looking for a simple layman's guide to setting up pages on the Internet, this simply isn't it. —Sean Smith

PUBLISHING¹ on the
internet



Thurston Moore

- *Psychic Heart*
- DGC

WHEN MOORE IS MORE

SHAKE THE DISEASE

Outbreak spreads to video stores

The novel *The Hot Zone* has precipitated an entire literary niche devoted to gloom and doom stories of devastating diseases. Hollywood is rarely far behind with films concentrating on the same theme; director Wolfgang Petersen's *Outbreak* is certainly just the first of many yet to come. It's a decent effort. The cast brings intense drama and pulse-pounding suspense to the thriller whose apparent objective is to scare the willies out of us.

In the film, the U.S. Army is in the business of investigating and studying new diseases. When a virulent bug capable of horribly killing its victims in a matter of hours works its way through a village in Zaire, the Army does what it does best. They cover it up and take samples to develop it as a bio-weapon.

General Billy Ford (Morgan Freeman) and Major General Donald McClintock (Donald Sutherland) have kept this event quiet for more than 30 years. Their secret remains safe until the virus reappears in Motaba, Zaire, where Billy's best man, Colonel Sam Daniels (Austin Hoffman) has been sent to investigate. Unlike Ford and McClintock, Daniels is more interested in protecting life than controlling the Motaba virus and using it as a weapon—a dispo-

sition that clearly brings him into conflict with his superiors.

The conflict escalates when the virus suddenly pops up in Boston. A quick response on the part of Civilian Disease Control agent (also the ex-Mrs. Daniels) Robbie Keough (Rene Russo) determines that the Boston cases were extremely isolated. The nation seems in the clear until a Motaba epidemic infects the entire town of Cedar Creek, CA, where one of the Boston victims was from.

Cedar Creek is immediately quarantined by the Army, who seem more dead-set on keeping the incident quiet than helping the citizens of the town. Luckily for Cedar Creek, Daniels disobeys direct orders to keep his team out of it.

The picture goes a little overboard with Daniel's attempts at reconciliation with Keough. Virtually every conversa-

tion the pair holds erupts in bitter arguments that make us feel the divorce was probably the right decision on Keough's part. At points in the film, their problems overshadow the main plot line of conquering the disease. The disease is personalized for us when Robbie later contracts the bug, but even that is redundant considering Daniel's

best friend and partner Casey Schuler (Kevin Spacey) becomes infected even earlier.

More effective is Daniel's relationship with General Ford. Their arguments take place on a moral level, leaving out the pettiness of the divorce subplot. Hoffman is at his best bucking the system, as many of his past roles readily attest.

Outbreak shows a frightening scenario of what one of these killer-diseases could do to a town very similar to one any of us might live in right now—and perhaps best yet, that we should avoid coughing in public theatres. It's rude, and germs are dirty. —John Born

It shouldn't be a big surprise to anyone that much of Sonic Youth-member Thurston Moore's solo effort sounds a hell of a lot like Sonic Youth. The thing is, *Psychic Hearts* comes off a lot more like Sonic Youth's looser experimental days than their recent more poppy work. This... is a good thing.

It's always interesting to learn what influence a musician brings to a band by hearing their solo efforts, and while listening to Frank Black and the Breeders may leave you wishing for the early days of the Pixies, Moore proves he can stand on his own with *Psychic Hearts*.

Tracks *Ono Soul*, *Psychic Hearts* and *Elegy For All the Dead Rock Stars* are strummy lullabies fairly reminiscent of some of Sonic Youth's best work (i.e., the *Sister* and *Daydream* Nation albums). This is by no means a criticism since these tracks appear

far less like Moore copying past glories than him further exploring some of the musical directions he may have left behind when Sonic Youth moved on into other areas.

That isn't to say that every track on the album apes older tunes. *Psychic Hearts* retains its own distinct sound through songs like *Pretty Bad* (where Moore nimbly whispers through distortion as echoing guitars fill out the background), the frantic *Putti Smith Math Scratch* and the ethereal 15-minute long *Blues From Beyond the Grave*.

Admittedly however, Moore is at his best in this album reexploring older avenues than breaking new ground. *Psychic Hearts* is a good listen, but if you're an older Sonic Youth fan, you're much more apt to enjoy this album over a recent inductee.

—Joe Fielder



Outbreak

■ Warner Home Video

12 1/2 345

bill." —Warre

CULTURE SHOCK

TAKE TO THE SKY

Air Combat Flies High And Takes No Flack

Flying games come in two flavors: flight simulators and arcade games. Flight sims are for the hardcore players who want to experience every

nuance of flying an airplane (preferably an F-16 or similar studly hardware). Arcade flight games aim to re-create the enjoyable aspects of flying while minimizing the boring, work-like aspects. *Air Combat* is an excellent example of this aesthetic, emphasizing on achieving the goals of the combat scenarios.

Early on, *Air Combat* deviates from reality. The player takes the role of a mercenary fighter pilot (sure, there are lots of those) in the employ of an unnamed country. Suffice to say that the player is rewarded monetarily for destroying

the enemy aircraft and ground positions. With enough money, the player can hire wingmen and buy more planes from a sort of used airplane dealership. The planes will

characteristics, *Air Combat* falls down on the weapon systems. Verisimilitude is flagrantly violated here by giving each plane 65(!) missiles, the idea of anything smaller

than a 767 carrying that much is ludicrous.

If one can get over these breaks with reality, *Air Combat* delivers a military flight arcade game with outstanding graphics, sound and addictive game play. It strikes a solid compromise between realism and enjoyability and gives even dedicated non-pilots

a taste of what it feels like to be Top Gun.

—John Wesley Hardin



excite any serious air combat player. There are F-14s, -15s and -16s, F-4s, F/A 18s, A-10s, several flavors

of MIG and some specialized planes like the F117-A Stealth Fighter, among others. While each plane has different flight

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Namco ■ SYSTEM: Sony PlayStation
- THEME: Flight Sim ■ MEGABYTES: 32
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

EMPTY-HEADED KILLING MACHINE

Two years ago, every video game on the market looked like *Street Fighter II*. These days, every video game looks like *Doom*. Some have questioned if this is any sort of an improvement at all.

Kileak: The Blood gives us a pretty standard set up for this (or any) type of video game; you're part of an elite team being sent in to clear out an alien infestation. Unfortunately,

the gunship that your platoon is on is blown out of the sky by some bad-asses. You're the last man, and it's your posthumous duty to go in there and give them bugs what for.

As in most first-person shooters, there is much emphasis on firepower and gun worship. A big part of the game's reward is finding and using ever larger, more powerful implements of destruction. Before we start



SEASONS IN THE MYST

Game Plays To Unify Home In Short Attention Span Theatre

If you'd rather shoot things than ponder them, proceed now to the next review.

Myst is Rand and Robyn Miller's cerebral, almost esoteric, puzzle game that debuted on home computers last year. With sublime graphics, subtle puzzles and a wally laid back, genteel atmosphere, *Myst* entranced many critics and puzzle fans, but left some of us scratch-

ing our heads and saying, "No sir, I don't get it." That love-it-or-leave-it reaction is still intact in Acclaim's *Myst* for the Sega Saturn.

My wife, who ignores most video games, played *Myst* eagerly. "I like it cause there's no timer to push you, and nobody is shooting at you." She hit it right on the head: *Myst* is an anti-action game. Gamers

can (and will) spend hours ruminating upon each of the many intricate, down-right fiendish logic-puzzles at *Myst*'s heart. This must be keen for some, but I play video games because I want to avoid extended bouts of hard thinking.

Even people who find the game play unappealing agree that *Myst* is beautiful. The style is reminis-

cent of Greg Hildebrandt's hyper-real paintings; it looks like real-life, but the edges are sharper, the colors brighter and shadows deeper than they are in our world. The excellent, understated music and ambient sound effects reinforce the otherworldly feel of the game.

Myst isn't as rewarding for those of us with short attention spans, but it's hard not to like the haunting world. While I can't say I love it, I know that it certainly doesn't suck. —John Wesley Hardin

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Acclaim
- SYSTEM: Saturn
- THEME: Adventure
- MEGABITS: 32
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

5



sounding too politically correct here, it's more bang for the buck that people want, but lack of original ideas threatens to kill the *Doom*-style game faster than you can say *Super Street Fighter II*.

Kileak: The Blood tries to go beyond the *Doom*-like norm by incorporating the occasional *Myst*-style logic puzzle. This comes close to working, but part of *Myst*'s success was its

phenomenal, atmospheric sound and copious eye-candy. *Kileak* only fosters the same claustrophobic paranoia that is the hallmark of first-person shooting games.

Oh, it looks okay—there's some nice 3-D rendered computer animation, but there is just not enough to do here. In *Doom*, there is always someone or something to shoot. In *Kileak*, there are only a handful

of enemies, and the numbers scarcely go up in the later levels. Lots of high-quality cut-scenes and digitized voices do not make up for lack of bad guys to perforate, and face it, if you wanted puzzle games, you'd play *Myst* in the first place. A message to PlayStation owners: Stick to your guns and hold out for a better game.

—John Wesley Hardin

TECH SPECS

- PUBLISHER: Sony
- SYSTEM: PlayStation
- THEME: Adventure
- MEGABITS: 32
- PLAYERS: 1
- LEVELS: N/A

COORDINATES: WEBMASTER@WWW.TRANSFUSION.COM

External Correspondence

BRAVO FUSION

Dear Fusion,

I just want to say I am an avid gamer and computer enthusiast and have found your mag to be packed with info in those areas.

Recently, I have noticed that you are incorporating much more non-gaming information, mainly music, book and movie information. (I have to admit I think your review of the *Johnny Mnemonic* soundtrack was a little harsh. It's a good background CD; I guess it does take itself a little too seriously though, just like the movie. Ugh!) I applaud this and hope you keep up with this trend! Man cannot live on games alone and I believe you know this too. More music reviews please, maybe even action/adventure movie reviews too. Also, could you run more on the Internet like cool sites, weird sites, X-rated sites and how to find them?

Jeremy Friedman
Dayton, Ohio

All right, Jeremy, settle down stallion. Thanks for the positive feedback and as you can see we've already upped the amount of movies, music, etc.—enjoy.

CALM DOWN RICH!

Dear Fusion,

In regards to Mr. Heimlich's opinions stated in the August issue. I just want to say, Rich just calm down! What's the big deal anyway? Game companies

just want to protect their product. It's not like they're trying to take away our First Amendment rights. I could care less if I have to load and play from the CD each and every time I play a game. I consider my game CDs to be just like music CDs—pop them in and play—so what.

Why don't you concentrate on something worthwhile like spending time with your family or bettering your community. The fact of the matter is you're just sitting on your butt being totally self-indulged by a light-emitting cathode tube, ooh look at the pretty lights! So Rich, you either have too much time on your hands or you just like to bitch about trivial things. I tend to think you just like to bitch about things.

Bob Perez
Chicago, IL



C'mon, Bob, why don't you tell us how you really feel? Mr Heimlich was unavailable for comment, but if he were you'd be sorry buster.

RELAX, LEAVE THE REGULATIN' TO US

Fusion,

On the topic of Sen. Exon, why doesn't the government just leave well enough alone? Christ! You worry about your kids and I'll worry about mine. If parents are so concerned about what their children are viewing, then why don't they regulate it within their own household? It's not like an 8-year-old can afford a several thousand dollar PC on their own anyway. There's a reason why the United States is listed number five on the United Nations' freedom index, and this is a shining example.

Matthew Berger
Washington, D.C.



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FALL OUT

DOWN IN FLAMES

Dear Fusion,
The 3DO will crash and burn very soon! Great article, my only problem with it was that it seemed a little too optimistic. If the M4 chip turns out to be killer, then maybe—just maybe—the system will be saved, otherwise it's dead. I just got a chance to play a Sega Saturn and that machine blows the 3DO out of the water. Sorry Trip Hawkins, I guess it's back to the drawing board for you and your crew.

John Billingsly
Houston, TX

Don't count Trip out yet—he has some tricks up his sleeve.

PURPLE HAZE

Dear Fusion,
Why the hell can't there be more games (PC and console) that feature original music artists and their music? It would be really cool to hear Jimi Hendrix or the Sex Pistols and other groups as the background music in games. Instead, all we get is boring synth-pop crap that

becomes so annoying that you feel like smashing your TV after a few minutes of play

Ted McMurry
New York, NY

You raise a good point, Ted, but the only problem is the huge cost of using those songs.

It's much cheaper to create original music for a game than pay all the fees and royalties to the record companies. In the meantime, turn down the volume and save the set.



EWZ ZOO REVIEW

(<http://albert.ocac.virginia.edu/~don3c/zoo.htm>)

The Web Site of the Month is not recommended for queasy Net surfers or anyone who ever truly loved an insect.

At the Squashed Bug Zoo (<http://albert.ocac.virginia.edu/~don3c/zoo.htm>), Netheads are treated to a smorgasbord of crushed bugs including blood-engorged ticks smashed with bull-teen hammers, some kind of "roach-thing" and even a moth that found its final resting place when it flew too close to a light bulb.

Always looking to expand his exhibit, the zookeeper has recently added a small vertebrate section with a rodent skull and the skeletal remains of a small lizard from Japan. The zoo also encourages patrons to e-mail photos of their own squished "little bastards."

Realizing that the site is bound to draw a reaction, visitors are also offered a chance to comment on what they see. Other than the occasional bleeding-heart bug lover threatening to go crying to the

REACH OUT: http this:

- ♦ LucasArts (<http://stuing.resnet.upenn.edu:8881/~jruspini/lucasarts/>) It's not the official LucasArts web page. In fact, it's not even affiliated with the company, but it does give the loudoun on LucasArts games, including playing tips and reviews. To contact LucasArts directly, send e-mail to: 75308.454@compuserve.com.
- ♦ Atomic Games (<http://atomic.com/>) offers news on their World War II games for the battle hungry. The site is also linked to several mailing lists where militants and cybergeeks alike can debate war-gaming strategies. E-mail should be sent to: kel-thz@atomic.com.
- ♦ The Epic MegaGames (<http://www.epicgames.com/>) site is pushing for their new release, Tyrian. The site also includes company newsletter information and solicitation for new programmers to join their team. If you're interested, e-mail to: tim@epicgames.com.
- ♦ And Don't forget to check out more at <http://www.Transfusion.com>

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authorities, however, the overwhelming consensus says that dead bugs are cool.

The Squashed Bug Zoo taps into the psyche of anyone who has ever smashed a pesky housefly with a magazine, knows they whacked the little bugger, looks at the remains and smiles at a job well done.

FLY IN THE FACE OF DANGER



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BATTLE IN THE SKIES

Copy protection chaos still an issue, part II

Last month, I voiced my concern over the unwelcome emergence of copy protection. Well, my column was out only a matter of days before the e-mail started pouring in from both sides of the issue. Most of the mail was positive but not all of it. Some of the

most incisive messages "suggested" I was misrepresenting the situation. Had I overstated the situation? I felt if anything, I wasn't blunt enough about the problem.

I noted that X COM 2, from MicroProse, represented one of the better ways of handling CD-ROM installations as the game offers a hard drive-only install option. What I didn't note was that this option isn't mentioned anywhere in the packaging. You literally have to trip over it while perusing the CD-ROM. But hey, at least it's there, for those of you lucky enough to bring along a flashlight and pitchfork. Could it be that MicroProse simply forgot to mention this option? I noticed they had no difficulty remembering to include a flyer for their 900 help line. They

never seem to forget those.

I also pointed out that LucasArts didn't even offer such an option for Dark Forces, even though it's quite possible to install the entire game to your hard drive. A few days after I wrote the last column, I logged onto CompuServe and monitored LucasArts support forum. I was very disturbed when I noticed LucasArts' representatives denying that it's even possible to run the game entirely

from your hard drive. It's one thing to tell a consumer who spent money on your product that you didn't include that possibility as an option. It's another thing altogether to deliberately lie about the situation when directly asked about it. That should never happen.

The straw that broke the proverbial camel's back was delivered by Interplay. *Virtual Pool* was a game I had serious interest in from the moment I heard it was in development. It's not perfect, but that's not my gripe with it. On the whole, it's a great first effort. My gripe is that Interplay purposely

forces you to load the game from the CD-ROM for the express reason of keeping you from stealing it. The game itself isn't very big at all. The only large files are the video sequences that you'll watch once or twice. The most ironic thing is that their on-line rep sent me public e-mail saying that he agrees with protecting it this way. He told me that I shouldn't be too upset because anyone who's decent with a debugger can get around that limitation anyway. Excuse me?! Interplay copy protects their game for fear of theft and then their on-line rep suggests that we should break the law by hacking their program? What's wrong with this picture?

"The straw that broke the proverbial camel's back was delivered by Interplay."

I have no sympathy for publishers like this. They knew full well that illegal copying was a part of the business but chose to enter into it anyway. Now that they've made their money, they act as if they never knew illegal copying went on. It's not enough that publishers treat us like outlaws. They've

also reneged on the promise they made to consumers about CD-ROMs in the first place.

For various reasons, CD-ROM drives initially received a cold reception from consumers. Publishers, realizing the potential benefits, also noted this cold reception and took action to create interest in the medium. Back then, you often read quotes similar to this: "CD-ROMs are far more cost effective than floppies, and that savings is something we can pass on to our customers." Well, it's now been a few years since CD-ROMs have taken off. It's difficult to find a machine without one. However, the price of games hasn't gone down at all. We spent the money for the drives. We made the commitment. We helped reduce publishers' overhead significantly. Where's the promised savings?

Sure, games have gotten bigger, but that's not the issue here. It's not as if publishers would charge \$150 for the same game if it were still on floppies. Of course they wouldn't because no one would pay that much, no matter what the content. Platform systems are even worse offenders.

Next month I'll offer some novel solutions on how the publishers can make all this up to us. Stay tuned. ■

AFTER AN APPARENT
ENCOUNTER WITH
SOME BAD YEAST, CHRIS
CRAWFORD RESPONDS TO
FUSION'S QUEST
COLUMN REQUEST
IN PERHAPS
THE STRANGEST
WAY
POSSIBLE.

The first application of the printing press 500 years ago was printing Bibles. The market for Bibles was soon saturated and printers, eager to expand their catalogs of offerings, cast about for other possibilities. One title stands high above all the others: *Le Morte D'Arthur*, by Thomas

new-phenomenon, Thomas Malory never became a star; he died before his book was published.

But one man saw it coming. By 1505, he had developed a pretty good hunch as to the nature of stardom and developed a personal strategy for achieving it. It took him

Unplugged!



Malory, published by Thomas Caxton in 1485. Caxton struck gold; *Le Morte D'Arthur* became the first best-seller in English history.

It can be difficult for a 20th-century reader to appreciate how starved for entertainment the 15th-century audience was. Saturday nights were pretty grim. So along comes an entirely new medium that provides entertainment anytime you want it, under your terms, at your own pace. This was truly a gigantic breakthrough!

Every medium makes stars of its creative talents, and this phenomenon was first demonstrated with literature. With 500 years of hindsight, it's easy for us to understand what a "star" is and how stars are made. But back in 1500, there had never been a single star in human history and nobody had any way of anticipating this

another 10 years to achieve his goal, but along the way he played his cards adroitly and stage-managed his image with astounding success. His name was Desiderius Erasmus.

Erasmus is one of the most fascinating characters in history. A genius, he saw the vast potential of the printing press, and used the new medium to suit his own goals. His *The Praise of Folly* was the first international best-seller. It reads like a comedy; Folly lectures to her students on her importance to humanity. The witty satire set all Europe laughing at the folly of the church, the kings and merchants. Erasmus used humor to advance a serious social agenda.

Monks, the butt of his most wicked jokes, fumed because Erasmus was the revered author of many serious religious works and could not be

condemned to the stake.

It was this combination of erudition and wit that made Erasmus the first superstar. His scholarship established credibility and his satire gave him popularity. He was too smart to be dismissed and too funny to be ignored.

Unfortunately, there were no copyright laws in those days, so it was impossible for authors to make money on sales of their works. As soon as a book appeared, other printers would make copies and offer them for sale. Thus, no printer could afford to pay royalties. Instead, authors dedicated their books to wealthy patrons, who were expected to reciprocate with cash. To stay ahead of the pirates, Erasmus continually revised and improved his works. A pirate's version might be cheaper, but it wouldn't be the latest version. Erasmus saw the value of creeping upgrades 500 years before Microsoft. ●

>Chris Crawford is the editor of *Interactive Entertainment Design*. "Is greatest game designer in the world" is currently involved in a secret, four-year project.>

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Street Fighters

GROW UP!

I have a picture I keep on my desk. It shows 11 people standing in front of a biplane at a small California airport. It was taken at a press junket, several years ago. Accolade had invited a select group of the electronic gaming press for a full day of hype regarding Bubsy Bobcat II, climaxing with a ride for everyone in an actual open-cockpit aircraft. It's a great photo, and as I look at the people in that picture, I see some of the seminal players in modern game journalism.

I remember this day mostly because of an interesting encounter I had with another writer that day. He was an editor with a new game publication that styled itself for a hardcore audience, and he was in the throes of SF2 fever. Like a religious zealot, he was in heavy-duty missionary mode. "You've got to do it," he proclaimed. "You've got to take, like, two years, and just totally master Street Fighter III!"

"Two years?" I wondered. I wasn't convinced. It seemed that 100+ weeks studying chess, golf or even real martial arts might be time better spent. Chess players and good golfers make money. Martial artists can break bones in self-defense. What, I wondered, would this incredible dedication to learning the complex controller commands needed to execute the Hundred-Hand Punch or a Kamikaze Fierce Fireball do to enhance my life?

What's my point? My point is that you pathetic individuals who spent years of your life mastering these goofy commands on fighting games need

"It's time to kick this genre in the head."

to Get A Life.

It's time to kick this genre in

the head. *Admit it: you spent years learning a skill that serves absolutely no use whatsoever in the real world. In the old days, players who mastered*

Space Invaders and Pac-Man at least learned pattern recognition. What have you idiots learned? A bunch of non-standard fatalities and bahalities and claytalities, and you're all no better off than you were when you started.

Move on. Move out of your moribund's home. Learn to try other types of games. At least move into three dimensions with

Virtua Fighter or Toshinden. Try sims, sports games, RPGs, just try something other than an interconnected series of spastic twitches, signifying nothing (Street Fighter Alpha is not an option).

Grow the hell up. In the future, try doing things like reading the works of Chinese

philosophers or viewing the cinematic output of John Woo. Simply understand that you were seduced by an over-hyped, two-dimensional genre and move beyond this point.

Get over it.

[Note: Interestingly enough, not long after that photograph was taken, yours truly was hired by Fenwick & West, attorneys for Data East, as an expert witness. It seemed that Capcom had decided that

Data East's Fighter's History was a ripoff of its SF2 games.

During the course of this case, Bill Fenwick became concerned that I would be called by Capcom's lawyers to actually play the games in an effort to refute my expertise.

So they paid me, full consultant wages plus expenses, to spend two days mastering special SF2 techniques with an arcade master.

I love an ironic epilogue.]

I can do all the animalities in Mortal Kombat 3!

THEIR CRIME IS CURIOSITY

HACKERS

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